DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 131 CS 211 113

AUTHOR O'Farrell, Lawrence
TITLE Teaching the Playwright's Art: A Research Report.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 174p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; Educational Research; Foreign Countries; *Playwriting; Questionnaires; Scripts; Secondary Education; Teaching Methods; Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS Canada; Drama in Education; *Playwrights; Professional Activities; Theater Research; *Writing Attitudes

ABSTRACT

In order to develop a guide for teaching a course on playwriting, a study reviewed related literature and conducted a survey of information and opinions from practicing playwrights. Members of the Playwrights' Union of Canada, 145 playwrights, completed a survey of ten open-ended questions describing the processes of the playwright's art, suggesting how this art can be introduced to drama students at the senior high school level, and indicating how playwriting can be related to a broad curriculum of dramatic education. Questions included: (1) What is your chief motivation for writing a play? (2) How should the student pick characters for a play? (3) What is the value of rewriting part or all of a play? and (4) Is there a set of principles that can be recommended to a teacher who is about to teach a course or unit on the processes of the playwright's art? Responses to the questions were analyzed qualitatively, and were presented along with implications for the school program, as well as guidelines for an ideal playwriting course. (Copies of the survey questionnaire, researcher's cover letter, Playwrights' Union cover letter, reminder letter, a biographical sketch of the researcher, and 43 references are appended.) (MM)

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Teaching the Playwright's Art

A Research Report

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TEACHING THE PLAYWRIGHT'S ART

A Research Report

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Abstract

Many school jurisdictions required that drama students, particularly those at the senior high school level, be given an opportunity to explore the playwright's art. However, little guidance was offered to teachers as to how such a course, or unit of study, should be taught. This study attempted to redress this oversight by two principle methods. Firstly a review of the related literature was undertaken. This review revealed that the bulk of the literature was the product of non-playwrights who derived their procedural advice, of which there was relatively little, from a theoretical analysis of famous plays. In spite of some areas of concensus, this literature was characterized by seemingly unresolvable contradictions.

The second component of the study was a survey of information and opinions solicited from practising playwrights. A total of 145 completed questionnaires formed the basis of a qualitative analysis aimed at overcoming some of the difficulties encountered in the literature. The result of these responses was a comprehensive picture of an ideal playwriting course, or unit. The idea of such a course met with considerable support from the playwriting community. Students would be advised to acquire experience in acting and theatre production. They would also be encouraged to see, read and

discuss a wide variety of plays. The course would be centered on the students' own writing experience. Although a suggested progression would be provided for consideration, students would be encouraged to develop individual approaches to writing. The preparation of a scenario and character descriptions would generally preceed the writing of dialogue but flexibility would be encouraged here, also. Rewriting scenes or entire plays would be regarded as a natural part of the process and not a sign of failure. The teacher would be responsible for creating a positive, non-judgmental atmosphere in the classroom and for promoting the students' individual creativity. Recommendations were made concerning the use of the findings of the present study as an educational model and the need for further research.

Dedication

For Renée, Robin, Andrea and Juliet to remember a very special year together.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Queen's University and my colleagues at the Faculty of Education for granting me the sabbatical leave during which I was able to complete the bulk of this project. Thanks are due, as well, to my Faculty's research and development committee for funding the distribution of questionnaires and to Sharon Haaksman for her meticulous secretarial assistance. I would also like to express my gratitude to the administration and members of the Playwrights Union of Canada without whose participation this study would not have been possible.

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I THE PROBLEM IN ITS SETTING

The Problem

In many jurisdictions, the secondary school drama curriculum is mandated to include a course, or at least a unit of study within a course, dealing with the art of writing plays. These playwriting units or courses are generally centered around practical writing projects in which the teacher is responsible for providing guidance in procedural and evaluative aspects of the process. However, curriculum guidelines for dramatic education contain very little by way of rationale or methodology for the teacher of such a course. Furthermore, the few resources which are recommended for teachers tend to overlook the potential advice which might come from practising playwrights.

The purpose of this study is to generate a large base of data about how playwrights and contributors to the related literature believe this art should be taught, particularly at the senior high school level, and to analyze this information with a view to identifying a set of priorities which can be used to guide the development of instructional units in playwriting.

The Sub-Problems

Three general areas of concern which this study will address are:

1. What processes do playwrights follow in the creation of original playscripts?
2. What instructional methods can be recommended to promote an understanding of these processes?
3. How should this instruction be related to a broader curriculum of dramatic education?

The study will analyze this data to identify major areas of agreement as well as significant minority views.

The Hypotheses

The present study is based on four hypotheses.

1. The first hypothesis is that the related literature will be found to contain a variety of conflicting and often poorly substantiated views on the teaching of the playwrights' art.
2. The second hypothesis is that a large sample of practising playwrights will be willing to complete a brief, open-ended questionnaire about the teaching of their art.
3. The third hypothesis is that a majority of responding playwrights will agree with the proposition that at least some aspects of their art can be addressed in an educational setting.

4. The fourth hypothesis is that an analysis of responses to the questionnaire will reveal areas of general agreement as well as significant minority views on how the playwrights' art should be taught and studied.

The Delimitations

The study is primarily concerned with the teaching of process, that is, with the question of how plays are written. Consequently, the study will not attempt to address such theoretical issues as the essence and purpose of drama or what qualities are displayed by a "good" play, except insofar as survey respondents and contributors to the related literature choose to incorporate them in a discussion of process.

The Definition of Terms

Playwright/Playwriting

Although there are obvious parallels between the writing of a play for presentation on stage and the writing of a script for presentation in another medium such as television, film or radio, the terms playwright and playwriting as they are used in this study refer primarily to the creation of play scripts for live theatre. These terms are used in this way not only by the researcher but also, largely, by sources and respondents.

The Elements of Drama

Throughout this study, a variety of terms are used to denote the elements of drama. These include plot, character and dialogue. A number of other terms, such as scenario, re-writing

and first draft, refer to aspects of the writing process. Although these terms may be subject to specific definition under other circumstances, they are all generally understood by playwrights, drama teachers and theatre critics. Because this study is aimed at the generation of hypotheses rather than the definition of a single, precise working method, each of these terms will be allowed to stand in its common usage within the context of each survey response or literary citation. In a number of instances, the source has provided a definition, or explanation, of a term and some of these have been included in the present study. However, the inclusion of one source's definition is not intended to impose this view on citations from any other source.

The Assumptions

1. The study is based on the assumption that the writing process and educational opinions of practising playwrights can provide a significant resource for teachers and students of the playwrights' art.

2. A second assumption is that the membership of the Playwrights Union of Canada - approximately 300 strong, and distributed across this country and abroad - can be regarded as a representative cross-section of practising playwrights for purposes of the survey portion of this study.

The Importance of the Study

"None but an author knows an author's cares
Or Fancy's fondness for the child she bears."

Cowper, The Progress of Error

The Ontario Ministry of Education stipulates in its Curriculum Guidelines for Dramatic Arts (1981), that high school drama students, particularly those in the Ontario Academic Credit course, should be encouraged to "explore the processes of the playwrights' art". This view is reflected in curricular documents from other provinces and in the dramatic literature, generally. Curriculum guidelines for British Columbia schools (1965, 1972, 1977) propose the inclusion of playwriting units in secondary school drama courses at three grade levels. The Departments of Education in Manitoba (1975) and Nova Scotia (1977) recommend that "second level" drama students be assigned play- or scene- writing tasks. A report published by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (1969) also recommends that playwriting be taught to theatre arts students in grade 12. The authors of this report specify, "This section of the course should lead to a general understanding of the basic elements of a good script, and the creative experience of writing a complete short play". (p.29).

Although these authorities are agreed that high school drama students should be given an opportunity to study the playwrights' art, none of them devotes more than two typewritten pages to an explanation of what that art consists of or how it should be taught. A number of books have been recommended as support

materials for these courses but these citations are not annotated and seem to be primarily directed toward the university student or beginning professional writer. None of these sources makes reference to any formal study of playwriting techniques or appropriate teaching methods. Nor do they take into account the advice of practicing professional playwrights. An initial search of the related literature revealed that very little research, to date, has been conducted into this important aspect of dramatic education. In fact, A Bibliography for Teachers/Facilitators of Dramatic Arts at the Secondary Level - 599 selected books and articles reviewed by Christine Turkewych (1978) - contains no titles which specifically address this topic.

Clearly, then, there is a pressing need for a study which will provide guidance to secondary school teachers who are charged with introducing the art of playwriting. This study includes both a thorough survey of the related literature and a significant contribution from recognized playwrights, in the hope that its recommendations will carry the stamp of validity.

Because of the scarcity of previous research in this field, the present study has the potential to become a keystone in the development of curriculum units and in the design of future research projects on this topic.

Research Methods

The study incorporates two principal components. The first is a search of the related literature to determine the priorities and methods which have been proposed for the education of aspiring

and developing playwrights. The bulk of this literature will be found to follow a model established by Aristotle. Specifically, it will consist of critically-based monograms written by non-playwrights. These sources are generally less concerned with the writing process than with the nature of the literary product. Those sources which do give advice on writing methods will do so on the basis of inferences drawn from a critical analysis of "great" plays rather than from personal experience in writing plays. Most of these sources give pre-eminence to the construction of plot over the development of character. However, a small number of sources argue forcefully that character should be given precedence over plot. The contributions of two distinguished playwrights introduce the question of the extent to which the playwright should accommodate the theatrical aspect of his medium. A small number of indirectly related books will also be examined in recognition of recommendations made by various survey respondents.

The analytical and often impressionistic nature of much of the related literature will make a further synthesis of views unsupportable without more input from practising playwrights. However, at least one source will indicate that it is possible to deduce a set of questions from the documented working methods of several accomplished playwrights. These questions will provide a basis for the second portion of this study.

The second component of the study is a survey of practising playwrights, in which respondents are invited to help resolve some of the issues raised by the related literature especially

those concerned with process. They are asked to describe the processes of the playwright's art, to suggest how this art should be introduced to drama students, particularly at the senior high school level, and to indicate how playwriting should be related to a broad curriculum of dramatic education.

This survey of playwrights' views takes the form of a questionnaire which was distributed to the entire membership of the Playwrights' Union of Canada in June of 1986. Out of a potential sample group of 293 members with currently valid addresses (299 posted, 6 returned undelivered), 6 members disqualified themselves as being either lacking in experience or no longer active as playwrights. This left a sample group of 287. A total of 145 completed questionnaires were returned representing a substantial absolute number of replies and about 50.5% of the final sample group. This level of response is clearly sufficient to indicate an excellent cross-section of Canadian playwrights and to establish a viable level of theoretical saturation.

Although the open-ended nature of the questions prohibits a formal statistical analysis, the questionnaire was designed, distributed and analyzed in keeping with the principles of a descriptive survey method of research (Leedy, 1974). The end result is a qualitative rather than a quantitative analysis. Qualitative research is usually applied in ethnographic situations - the study of people in social environments. Robert Stake (1975), for example, maintains that some pre-ordinate procedures for educational evaluation are "insensitive

to the uniqueness of the local programme, or to the quality of the experience provided to youngsters". In an effort to provide a sensitive evaluation of an arts in education program, Stake advocates a process of "responsive" evaluation which orients more directly to program activities than to program intents. Similarly, Parlett and Hamilton (1972), following the lead of Scriven (1967) and Popham (1963), propose "Evaluation as Illumination" for the study of innovatory programs. Witkin (1974) and Eisner (1979) make valuable contributions in this area, also.

The present study is not fully ethnographic in that the responses are entirely written. However, the qualitative emphasis on an open and responsive approach was adopted to the questionnaire format. The specific questions asked were regarded as catalysts for a wide-ranging discussion rather than as rigorously narrow investigative instruments.

The population was chosen to insure a knowledgeable response from practising playwrights who have met a relatively high standard of success. To be admitted to the Playwrights' Union of Canada, each member has had at least one play produced professionally. Some equivalent experiences have been permitted.

The survey was intended to elicit and accommodate the unique point of view presented by each of the "expert" respondents. To provide a structure which might facilitate their responses, the related literature was consulted in an effort to identify a number of issues which tend to recur in discussions on the process of writing plays. Particularly helpful in this regard

was William J. Millar's book Modern Playwrights At Work (1968). Key issues which are addressed in the following set of survey questions include the problems of how professional writers have learned their art, why they write plays, whether they prefer to work within a routine or to follow inspiration, where characters originate, the relative importance of plot and character as reflected in the writing of a scenario and the developing of characters, the relative importance of revision in the writing process and the sequence a playwright might follow in creating a play script. The survey also attempted to elicit opinions on how a course, or study unit on the processes of the playwright's art might be taught and the possibility of incorporating such a course or unit within a general program of dramatic education. The survey questions were posed directly and as specifically as possible to facilitate a comparison of replies. However, the questionnaire also included an invitation to add comments on a separate page if the respondent felt that the questions had missed any aspect of the playwriting process as it relates to the student-writer, particularly at the secondary level. Subjects were assured that all responses in any form would be gratefully received and considered in the final analysis. As it turned out, some respondents took advantage of this invitation, choosing to supplement or even replace the formal questions with a response format of their own devising. As promised, these were treated as valid responses, on the same footing as all the others.

Here, then, are the questions as they appeared in the survey:

1. How did you learn to write plays?
2. What is your chief motivation for writing a play?
3. Do you write within the discipline of a routine working day? Please comment.
4. How should the student pick characters for a play?
5. Should the student write a scenario before beginning to write the dialogue? Please comment.
6. How should the student go about developing a character?
7. What is the value of re-writing part or all of the play?
8. Is there a specific order of events which you can recommend the student follow over the course of writing a play?
9. Is there a particular set of principles which you would recommend to a teacher who is about to teach a course (or a unit) on the processes of the playwright's art?
10. How should the teaching of the art of playwriting be related to a general education in the field of drama/theatre?

By and large the pertinancy of these questions has been validated by the substantial response which each was able to elicit from practicing playwrights. That is not to say that every respondent agreed with the underlying assumptions of each question. For example, in responding to the fourth question, "How should the student pick characters for a play?", a number of respondents said, in effect, "You don't pick characters, they

pick you." However, this kind of response, articulating an organic, character-centered approach to playwriting speaks directly to two issues represented by the question (i.e., where characters originate and the relative importance of plot and characters).

The validity of the survey was questioned by six members of the sample group who refused to answer the questionnaire (and who consequently, were not included among the 145 respondents) and also by one respondent who expressed reservations while at the same time answering some of the questions. Reasons for "rejecting" the survey included the following comments.

- "Writing is what I do for a living - not preach."
- "Your questions are not to the point and if you want my expert advice I am available to teach either you or your students how it is done."
- "I don't believe high school students know enough about life to write plays."

On the other hand, a total of 28 respondents took the time to write supportive comments. These included the following statements.

- "I think this is very valuable."
- "I felt it was important to answer; so few academic institutions concern themselves at all with what will be the experience of the graduate once he/she emerges into the professional world of theatre."
- "I am certainly interested in the results of this survey, since I just started teaching playwriting."

- "... as my own experiences with high school drama education were not positive, I'm pleased to respond to such a responsible survey . . ."
- "Your questionnaire has thus been invaluable in making me think a little about the whole process - longer, I can assure you than the "few minutes" you suggested it might take . . . . I hope to have a chance to see the results."
- "My very best wishes for your project. It is very much needed."
- ". . . thank you for consulting Canadian playwrights in this regard."

Several respondents generously offered to provide more information and assistance upon request.

The general validity of the questionnaire, therefore, rests on four main arguments.

1. The questions were derived from a survey of the related literature and the specific teaching mandates in a number of jurisdictions.
2. The questionnaire was submitted for comments and support to representatives of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University and the Playwrights' Union of Canada. The University responded by granting the researcher a sabbatical leave and funding for the project. The Playwrights' Union of Canada also responded enthusiastically to the questionnaire. A letter from Jane Buss, then Executive Director of

P.U.C. said, in part, "I can't tell you how welcome, fitting, timely . . . your proposal is." She provided a covering letter for the questionnaire encouraging members to "share your knowledge" with the researcher.

3. Supportive comments from respondents out-numbered negative remarks at a ratio of almost five to one.
4. Substantial numbers of respondents were clearly able to use the questionnaire as a suitable framework within which to address the underlying issues.

The weight of this validation makes it necessary for drama educators to regard the areas of general agreement and significant minority views identified in the study with careful attention. This analysis is primarily intended to provide hypotheses for further study. However, the strength of support for the questionnaire cannot be overlooked. Recommendations derived from this study are sufficiently substantiated to allow them to stand, at least, as an interim set of principles for the development and evaluation of courses and units of study in the processes of the playwright's art.

Responses to the questions were analyzed in the following manner. Each question was addressed separately and in turn. All responses to the questions were carefully read and a record was kept of each new point which occurred. Whenever a previously recorded statement was echoed by another respondent, the occurrence was noted by a symbol under the first iteration of the idea. Consequently, the specific wording of each item is usually that of the first respondent who made that paritcular point.

Sometimes the wording of a later respondent was substituted, if it seemed to be more complete or if it addressed the idea in a more general way than the original statement (which was then subsumed by it). The number of times each citation was mentioned was then calculated and the citations were put in order of numerical priority. A second level of analysis was then applied. Citations were again examined with a view to identifying any larger categories to which individual ideas might belong. For example, in answer to question number one (How did you learn to write plays?) 43 respondents credited the benefits of reading plays and 41, valued the experience of watching plays in performance. Because these categories overlapped, with a number of respondents mentioning both reading and watching plays, it seemed advisable to combine reading and watching into a single larger category - that of gaining exposure to the work of other playwrights. In describing a joint citation of this kind, the study strives to maintain the specific character of each component by mentioning the sub-totals of each.

One objective in reporting the various ideas within each group of responses was to convey a sense of the specific language used by respondents. Therefore, alternative ways in which an idea was expressed are often included in the study. Another related objective was to find a way of giving a voice to those statements which were not widely supported but which, nevertheless, articulate a genuine alternative point of view. Consequently, an exerpt from each of these statements was reported in the study, many of these under the heading of

"individual perspectives". Every effort was made to ensure that paraphrasing reflected the essence of the responses and that respondents' actual language was denoted by quotation marks. It might be added, here, that every effort was also made to avoid any kind of gender bias in the body of this report. In some cases, this objective was at odds with specific wording used by respondents and literary sources. In such cases, quotation marks were used to clarify the origin of the language in question.

The analysis of responses to each question, therefore, represents a multi-phased examination and comparison of citations which are reported in such a way as to convey something of the actual language in which they were originally expressed. This analysis is followed in each case, by a section explaining the implications of this analysis for the school program in dramatic education. The concluding section brings together these implications in an effort to present an overview of playwrights' views on the ideal course or unit dealing with the playwright's art. Recommendations are then made on the basis of this survey in comparison with general principles derived from the related literature. These recommendations are concerned with the need for further research and with the desirability of using this set of conclusions as the basis for pilot programs in the secondary school.

II A REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The Legacy of Aristotle

Very little has been published which directly addresses the question of how to teach the playwrights' art, that is how to develop and implement a curriculum. But, a great deal of literature is available which speaks to the novice (or developing) playwright with significant implications for teachers working in this field. It is this body of work which must serve as the main literary resource for our present study. The advice given by each publication will provide a model for consideration in the development of a more comprehensive approach to teaching the playwrights' art.

The most influential treatise in the history of this subject is Aristotle's On The Art of Poetry (1920 ed.). Written in the fourth Century B.C., this brief but seminal work is specifically concerned with tragedy (along with the epic poem) but in the absence of Aristotle's companion treatment of comedy, this book has been applied to theories concerned with all forms of drama. Aristotle bases his observations on an analysis of well-known plays, particularly those of the fifth Century B.C. In speaking, not as an experienced playwright, but rather as a critic, Aristotle initiated a tradition which has dominated the literature ever since. Very few playwrights have published substantial descriptions of their own working methods or elaborated on advice for beginning writers. Two books by successful playwrights will be examined later in this chapter.

Aristotle does offer a number of suggestions concerning the process of writing, but, by and large he is concerned with the characteristics of the form - that is what makes for a good play. This emphasis, too, has become traditional in the related literature. Many later theorists neglect to deal with the writing process; some outrightly refuse to do so.

In describing the tragic form, Aristotle places a great deal of emphasis on the inter-dependence of what he considers to be the six essential elements of drama - plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. His analysis is really very balanced. But his principle hypothesis that tragedy is essentially an action has led to later interpretations which tend to give prominence to plot. Aristotle, himself, speaks of the poet ". . . constructing his Plots, and engaged on the Diction in which they are worked out . . ." (p.60) So, perhaps the later interpretations are somewhat justified.

Aristotle offers seven items of advice to writers which refer, primarily, to the writing process rather than to the ideal form of the product. The writer should "put the actual scenes as far as possible before his eyes . . ." and "should even act his story with the very gestures of his personages . . . . His story . . . he should first simplify and reduce to a universal form, before proceeding to lengthen it out by the insertion of episodes." The writer should master both complication and denoument and should aim at combining "every element of interest." The writer is warned against writing a tragedy "on an epic body of incident (i.e., one with a plurality of stories in

it)". Finally, the chorus should be regarded as "one of the actors." (pp.64-66) Later, he advises the poet against excessive use of direct address to the audience in the author's own voice.

The Aristotelian tradition, then, is characterized by an analytical approach illustrated by successful plays, with greater concern for the integrity of the product than for the efficacy of the writing method. It tends to stress plot over the other dramatic elements and assumes a somewhat methodical approach on the part of the playwright.

The impact which Aristotle has had on modern (post-medieval) playwriting and the way his work has been interpreted owes a great deal to the Renaissancce and particularly to the work of Lodovico Castelvetro whose On Aristotle's Poetics (1974 ed.) appeared in 1570. Castelvetro further stresses the importance of action and plot. He writes, for example, "playwrights do not make the plot, or actions, to represent characters; rather, they employ characters to accompany the actions . . . ." (pg.145). This may not be an altogether unfair extension of Aristotle's thesis, but in other areas, Castelvetro positively distorts the thrust of the original. For example, it is Castelvetro, not Aristotle, who proposes the famous unities of action, time and place. He writes, " . . . the plot should be single and concerned with one person only." (pg.145) "In tragedy, the place of the action is restricted not only to one site, but to that scene which alone can be absorbed by the vision of one person," (pg.149). He also states ". . . just as the boundary of place is the stage, so is the boundary of time that period in which the

spectators can comfortably remain sitting in the theatre." (pg.144)

The Aristotelian tradition is reflected somewhat by Alfred Hennequin (1890), whose principles of dramatic construction are based on observation rather than personal writing experience. His analysis sounds very dated today with its advice on how to create plays which meet the exigencies of the late Victorian actor-manager system. For example, Hennequin's ideal play would include roles for the star, the leading man, the heavy, the first and second old man, the soubrette and the ingenue. Hennequin does, however, strike a highly practical note by beginning his book with a lengthy section describing the minutae of theatre production. Although the plays and machinery which Hennequin describes may now be obsolete, his interest in theatre technique is to some extent a reflection of Aristotle's interest in "spectacle".

In the literature of the present century the literary/ critical approach has been continued by Hopkins (1918) who expends much of his energy deploring contemporary standards and by Ervine (1928), Lawson (1936), Jeans (1949), Greenwood (1950) and Hull (1968). The limitations of this analytically-based approach are articulated frankly by Ervine who admits, "I do not propose . . . in this book to tell the reader how to become a successful dramatist, for, if I knew that secret, I should become one myself." (pg.9)

Many writers in this critical tradition follow Ervine's resolve to avoid offering advice on technical matters in which

they have not, personally, demonstrated any expertise, but some, like Knows (1928) and Hoare (1949) do venture into the realm of process. Kline (1970) provides a simplified analysis for high school students. His work is also critically-based but offers more extensive guidance to the novice playwright than many of his predecessors. He addresses the teacher and students of a grade eleven class in playwriting . "Most books on playwriting", he asserts, "are concerned with what the play should be. This book is more concerned with what the playwright, should be." (pg.17) This aim is pursued insofar as the author speaks in the second person to a high school student who is trying to develop into a playwright. Kline reiterates a standard analysis concerning the need for a good plot, well developed characters and a sense of the universal. He states that there are no rules, but he then contradicts this position by outlining principles such as, for example, the advice that the events which occur in a play should lead the audience to expect other events to occur as a result of them.

Kline is by no means the only author to be caught in a contradiction between a philosophical stance against the credibility of rules and the impulse to lay out a set of rules, nonetheless. A prime example of this is a book by Sam Smiley (1971) which is thorough but dauntingly prescriptive despite its assertion that it doesn't prescribe. Not only must the would-be writer follow a methodical process of note-making, but he or she must also live an outgoing life if he or she expects to have anything to say. "He should live with frenzy, if that means

overcoming natural human lethargy and the impulse to treasure the security of one place and a narrow circle of relationships . . . . He must live his art." (p.17)

Smiley's treatise is subjective and dogmatic, a questionable successor to Aristotle's long tradition of objective observation and careful argument. But he, too, is not alone in basing his advice on an inadequately substantiated analysis. Two other recent theorists Busfield (1971), and Griffiths (1984), also present impressionistic accounts of the playwrights art. Busfield includes, in his work, an appendix containing exercises and projects in dramatic writing divided into four categories, ". . . (1) those to discipline the writer, (2) those to 'free' him, (3) those designed for individual use, and (4) those that can be done in a playwriting class or by a group of writers working together." (pg.231) Busfield's book is rather thoughtful whereas Griffiths' work is more eliptical.

An Emphasis on Character

Most of the books mentioned above echo the implication found in Aristotle that the plot of a play will generally take shape before a clearly-developed cast of characters can emerge. However, two books which follow in the critical tradition give pre-eminence to the conception of character. William Archer (1912) and Lajas Egri (1960) both present analyses which result in the creation of character-driven plays. These works are of particular interest because they were recommended by respondents to the questionnaire in the present study.

Archer, whose book Playmaking is subtitled A Manual of Craftsmanship (1912), begins with the disclaimer that there are no rules for writing a play and disavows his ability to speak from experience. He asks, "How comes it that so many people - and I among the number - who couldn't write a play to save their lives, are eager to tell others how to do so?" His answer is that the nature of theatrical production makes drama unlike other forms of literature. He further asserts that the ability to conceive and depict characters "can neither be acquired nor regulated by theoretical recommendations." (pg.371) He limits himself, therefore, to "a comparatively mechancial and formal part" of the dramatist's craft, "the art of structure". (pg.9)

Archer asserts that the characters should control the plot and so theatre is required to "exhibit character in action". (pg.23) Although he acknowledges that conflict is "one of the most dramatic elements in life" (pg.31), he chooses to define the essence of drama in terms of crisis. In structuring a play, the writer should divide the play into three acts to insure that it has a beginning, a middle and an end. Each act "ought to consist either of a minor crisis carried to its temporary solution, or a well-marked group of such crises". The first act can begin as in Shakespeare, in the midst of the action or, as in Ibsen, in the gradual unfolding of the drama of the past. In any event, Archer tells the playwright, ". . . let your first ten minutes by all means be crisp, arresting, stimulating, but do not let them embody any absolutely vital matter, ignorance of which would leave the spectator in the dark as to the general design and

purport of the play" (pg.130). This last bit of advice is offered in view of the contemporary fashion of audience members arriving late.

Apart from structural considerations, Archer does offer five suggestions concerning the actual writing process. He presents these, not as rules, but as "considerations". In the light of Ibsen's working routine, Archer advises keeping the play "fluid or plastic" (pg.53) for as long as possible. It should not become fixed until it has had time to "grow and ripen" (pg.53). He considers a scenario to be an indispensible tool. However, he also recommends that, "Room should be left as long as possible for unexpected developments of character." Another consideration which the writer should address early in his work, is the need to insure that "his theme is capable of a satisfactory ending" (pg.62). Archer acknowledges that some playwrights do not begin at the beginning of a play but prefer to deal with key passages first and he approves of this approach insofar as it helps maintain the fluid state of the process. Finally, he says that "the playwright must evidently at some point . . . visualize the stage picture in considerable detail." However, by the "stage picture" he means an ideal fictional setting, not the stage, itself. He wishes to avoid "theatricality" (pg. 73).

Egri's book, The Art of Dramatic Writing, also has a significant subtitle - It's Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives, (1960). This subtitle highlights Egri's character-centered approach. The original title of the book "How to Write a Play" indicates its instructive intent. Egri

considers that the primary motivation for writing is to be able to feel important. Self-expression is a means to achieve this goal. Using a critical approach in the Aristotelian tradition, Egri cites conflicting theories throughout history, such as the varying importance allotted to plot and character. He insists that there are no rules for writing plays but acknowledges, too, that instinct is not enough. He expresses a dissatisfaction with the literature for its contradictory nature and lack of overall focus. He says, "The unifying force was missing." (pg.xvi) He then states the thesis on which his own work is based. "We think we know what that force is: human character, in all its infinite ramifications and dialectical contradictions." (pg.xvi)

Egri presents his concept of playwriting in logical terms. He says that every play must have a premise which must be "proved", just as life is a constant series of tiny premises which add up to the premise of one's life. Egri goes on to give examples of what he considers to be the premises of several classical plays. His analysis is somewhat questionable in spots. How many Shakespearian critics would agree that the operating principle of Romeo and Juliet is "Great love defies even death"? (pg.3) As Harvard Professor Harry Levin points out (1965), "The over-riding pattern through which [Juliet] and Romeo have been trying to break - call it Fortune, the stars, or what you will - ends by closing in and breaking them; their private world disappears and we are left in the social ambience again." (pg.398) Many of his premises sound like the kind of "morals"

which conclude fables. Nevertheless, Egri insists that every play must begin with a premise and specifically one which is "a conviction of your own". (pg.15)

For Egri, premise is the first of three basic elements in drama. The other two are character and conflict. The second element, character is to be approached in a thoroughgoing fashion. The writer must get to know the physiology, the sociology and the psychology of the character - who is to be understood through motivation. The character will change as a result of environmental influences and the change is to be extreme. Egri asserts that all life, and therefore life in plays, is based on a constant movement between opposites (or "contradiction") and that a playwright must justify this kind of change through a detailed preparation of the characters. In the course of a play, character is revealed through conflict, in that the conflict forces the character to make a series of decisions which change both the character's situation and his or her attitude toward life. And this change is one of extremes - from isolation to collective action, from hatred to love or from love to hatred, for example. "Every good play moves from pole to pole". (pg.75)

In order to be able to sustain "the burden of protracted conflict in a play", the central character must be strong and must be "ready for conflict." (pg.86) Egri refutes Archer's assertion that writers cannot be taught to reproduce character. He also refutes Lawson's claim that one cannot study the "inwardness" or soul of a play. Furthermore, he disputes

Aristotle's emphasis on action. He maintains that character, not plot, is the driving force in drama because "characters create the conflict". (pg.99) As a result of this conviction, Egri maintains that characters can plot their own play. This effect can be achieved as follows: "You have a premise on the one side and a perfect character study on the other. You must stay on the straight road marked by these limits and not wander off on a byway." (pg.105) The pivotal character is the one who creates the conflict and is an indispensible element in every play. The antagonist is "anyone who opposes the pivotal character" (pg.113) and must be as strong and as "ruthless" as the pivotal character. This approach would seem to promote a very high contrast, even extreme, form of drama, although Egri asserts that his analysis applies equally to Chechov, to farce, etc.

Further insight into the stating of a proposition comes from Grebanier (1979) who says that the proposition is the logical statement of a plot. It must, he says, be understood as "1. An analysis of the main action only . . . . 2. An analysis of the action that is actually in the play . . . . " (pg.86) The proposition has a causally related beginning, middle and end. Closely related to the proposition in Grebanier's structural analysis is the climax. Contrary to popular belief, the climax is not the most exciting moment in a play. It is, rather, the turning point. Grebanier specifies that it is always a deed performed by the second character. He maintains further, that this deed involves a third character (apart from the antagonist and protagonist), so that it is not possible to write a two-

character play unless the third character can be replaced by some other kind of catalyst. In a three act play, says Grebanier, "the usual (but not inevitable) place for the climax is at the end of Act II".

Unlike Egri, however, Grebanier gives pre-eminence to plot over character. This highlights the main difficulty in trying to learn process from representatives of the critical school - when a dispute occurs, who is to be believed? Often, arguments are strong on both sides and the novice writer who is looking for practical results is left with only academic speculation.

Two Playwrights Speak

Two distinguished playwrights who have contributed substantially to the literature are John Van Druten and J. B. Priestly. Van Druten, in Playwright At Work (1953) addresses the aspiring playwright in an informal but thoughtful way. He is particularly sensitive to the process which a writer goes through in creating a work of drama. Although he offers a few cautionary words, or "tips", Van Druten is primarily reflective rather than prescriptive. He draws on his own experiences (over twenty-five years) as a playwright and illustrates his ideas with paraphrased examples. Van Druten is very much opposed to the use of a methodical approach to writing and prefers a less plot-centered type of drama than many critics in the Aristotelian tradition would allow. He spends four entire chapters dealing with the conception of the play before addressing the question of construction. The quality of the idea on which

the play is based is vitally important. In conclusion, however, Van Druten acknowledges that a great ground-breaking play might be written in spite of his advice. He readily admits his own limitations both as a playwright and as an advisor to others. He says, "I am still bound by the conventions of the fourth wall, and the pretense that the play is really happening somewhere." (pg.14)

Priestly's work, The Art of the Dramatist (1957) strikes a slightly more theatrical note. This brief but eloquent essay is, in fact, a lecture originally delivered to the Old Vic Club, as chaired by Sir Ralph Richardson. In its present format, the lecture is accompanied by a set of notes and appendices. Priestly emphasizes the need for the playwright to function on two levels simultaneously. The first is the theatrical level, in which the writer is thinking of actors on a stage playing their roles for an audience, through a set of conventions. The second is the realistic level in which the writer is thinking of the characters and their actions as they would occur in real life. Priestly maintains that only when these levels are reached together can the audience achieve the "dramatic experience" which is, for him, the object of all dramatic writing.

There may be some truth in Van Druten's suggestion that a playwright giving advice to others may be inclined, albeit unwittingly, to perpetuate his or her own style of drama. Nevertheless, in questions of process, a working playwright clearly has more to offer than the average critic who must deduce a working method from the final dramatic product. It is, indeed,

unfortunate that more playwrights have not enriched the related literature to the extent that these two distinguished artists have.

Alternative Angles

As a result of recommendations made by survey respondents, this review of the literature has been expanded to include four books which, while somethat peripheral to the present subject, nevertheless offer some valuable and relevent insights. These are Johnstone (1979), Engel (1981), Field (1984) and Gardiner (1984).

Keith Johnstone's book Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre (1979) is primarily concerned with developing actors through improvisation, but it also looks at the larger question of developing creativity in every individual. Johnstone's methods are based on his experience as a playwright, a play reader, a teacher and the former head of the script department at the Royal Court Theatre during the fertile years of the 1950's. He attributes to group improvisations run by himself, some direct results in the plays of Edward Bond, John Arden, Ann Jellicoe and Arnold Wesker. These improvisation workshops for writers were directed in such a way as to avoid discussion and concentrate on action. He says, ". . . we should agree to discuss nothing that could be acted out. We learned that things invented on the spur of the moment could be as good or better than the texts we laboured over. We developed practical attitudes to the theatre." As Edward Bond said, "The writers' group taught me that drama was about relationships, not about characters." (pp.25-26)

Johnstone's work is rooted in the interplay between high and low status - a concept which he considers to be compatible with Stanislavsky, despite the obvious differences. He favours a spontaneous, direct and obvious approach over a laboured search for originality and he relies on the immediate response of an audience (or the participants) to validate the work in hand.

In approaching the development of narrative skills, Johnstone chooses to ignore content because, "If you want to write a 'working-class' play then you'd better be working class." (pg.111) He prefers to concentrate, therefore, on structure and a demonstration that narration is something everyone is capable of (through free-association, for example). A playwright, he says, should compose stories by describing a routine and then interrupting it. His rules are, "(1) interrupt a routine; (2) keep the action onstage - don't get diverted on to an action that has happened elsewhere, or at some other time; (3) don't cancel the story." (pg.141) Throughout the book, Johnstone provides a variety of exercises which are designed to help the student achieve the objectives he outlines.

Words With Music: The Broadway Musical Libretto (1981) is Lehman Engel's contribution to this literature. Written by a distinguished director of Broadway musicals, the book is an insightful examination of the peculiar nature of the Broadway musical libretto with special attention to how it differs from virtually every other dramatic form, including the librettos of operas and operettas. He states that there are no rules but goes

on to make a strong assertion that it is necessary to learn the form as it exists before making changes to the form.

Engel maintains that characters in a musical are necessarily simple and self-evident. The exposition of characters and plot comes early in the piece, in a compact, precise and immediate way. The plot is skeletal and divided into a multiplicity of scenes, usually grouped into two acts, the second of which is relatively short. Engel says that the libretto usually covers a very short span of time, from one to three days and that the action - the plot and sub plot - take precedence over character development. This is largely an historical and analytical book which is not greatly concerned with the actual writing process.

Another book recommended by a survey respondent is The Screenwriter's Workbook (1984), by Syd Field. Although specifically directed toward the writing of scripts for motion pictures (as opposed to either live theatre or television), this book deals with issues which are relevant to the writing of any dramatic script. Field's approach is primarily structural. He gives the student writer free reign as to the subject and the development of character, but lays out a detailed structural mold into which the story, any story, should be fashioned. Field explains that, allowing for minor variations, a film script is 120 pages long and can be divided into three acts which are made up of a total of four dramatic units of 30 pages each.

Act I, the first 30 pages, is devoted to setting up the rest of the script. It contains the first "plot point" at about page 25. A plot point is "an incident, episode, or event that 'hooks'

into the action and spins it around into another direction". (pg.30) Act II, the following 60 pages, is characterized by confrontation and culminates in plot point two, another reversal, which occurs around page 85. This act is divided into two 30-page halves, connected by the mid-point which not only links the two halves, but also seems to be a turning point, in itself. For example, in E.T. - The Extraterrestrial, the mid-point is E.T.'s announcement that he wants to "phone home", which happens on page 61 of the script. Each half of Act II is, itself, divided by a kind of reversal called a "pinch", the purpose of which is to keep the story on track. Act III, another 30-page unit of dramatic action, provides a resolution to the story or to the characters.

Field speaks with the authority of an experienced screen-writer and a teacher whose students have enjoyed success in getting their scripts produced. He illustrates his analysis with examples from recent, well-known films, referring to specific page numbers in each script. He provides an exercise section at the end of each chapter which usually summarizes the chapter content and exhorts the student to apply it, methodically, to the writing of his or her own script.

John Gardiner's book is The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers (1984). Unlike virtually all of the other books examined so far, this work is not specifically concerned about writing dramatic literature. Gardiner speaks from the vantage point of a successful writer and an experienced teacher. He is particularly concerned with the novel form and with short

fiction. Speaking to the serious beginning writer, Gardiner says that there are no universal rules for writing fiction and asserts that the writer must strive for mastery rather than ask for abstract answers. He argues at length in favour of a university education as a valuable route for preparing the writer who must "develop an eye for what - by his own carefully informed standards - works." (pg.16)

Gardiner recommends that the student should begin by undertaking a self-directed review of grammar and should then move on to the writing of fiction not by writing about what he or she knows, but by writing the kind of fiction (the genre) he or she knows and likes the best. "None of these [celebrated] writers, ancient or modern, sat down 'to express himself'. They sat down to write this kind of story or that . . . ." (pg. 21) Gardiner maintains that most literary innovation arises from genre-crossing or from the elevation of popular forms.

Literature courses, especially those in high school, tend to over-emphasis works which accommodate the critical process and overlook works of great entertainment value. Gardiner says that plot and character must be conceived simultaneously, planned together and developed through rewriting after the first draft.

In order to improve technique, the student should work on sharply defined problems. Gardiner maintains that the writer's original indifference to the material, as assigned, can give him or her real freedom to write what he or she really feels. Serious blockages can arise from an effort to write about one's own parents or friends. Valuable lessons can be learned,

too, through imitating other writers. In constructing a plot, the writer can work in one of three different ways - by borrowing a traditional story or action drawn from life, by working backward from the climax, or by working forward from an initial situation. Gardiner provides a variety of exercises to promote mastery. Some of these can be done in a group through oral co-operation. These include, for example, the listing of details to define a pair of characters, the writing of an opening paragraph, the listing of the customary elements of various genres and the plotting of stories in a number of genres. Some of the exercises are to be done individually. Examples include the writing of a paragraph, a monologue, a long sentence with consistent tone, the description of a landscape from a character's point of view, and the description of a particular event in five different ways.

Toward A Research Base

Diverse as the related literature may be, and despite introductory disclaimers which are sometimes contradicted by the body of a work, a consensus seems to exist among the authors considered, that writing for the theatre is somehow different from other forms of writing and ought to be addressed separately, while still allowing for the influence of non-dramatic writers such as Gardiner. There also seems to be agreement that at least some aspects of the playwright's art can be taught through a variety of group and individual exercises including participation in improvisations. However, there are persistent disagreements

on such key issues as the relative importance of plot and character in initiating the writing process. A resolution of these dilemmas is virtually impossible to extract from a literature which is largely the product of critics, however brilliant, who have no first-hand experience in the writing of plays.

One scholar has taken an important initiative in rectifying this imbalance by taking a close look at the the lives and working methods of several successful playwrights. In his book Modern Playwrights at Work (1968), J. William Miller presents case histories of a number of famous writers using a documentary approach. Beginning with a thorough examination of contemporary accounts concerning such writers as Ibsen, O'Neill and their contemporaries, supplemented by statements by the subjects themselves, whenever available, Miller builds a credible picture of each playwright at work. From a comparison of the working methods of several subjects, Miller produces a lengthy list of questions which he considers pertinent to the aspiring writer. The following examples provide a small cross-section from this extensive list.

"What personal need or creative drive starts a play?
What should I write about?
Do I need the discipline of a routine working day?
Should I talk to others about some play I am writing or thinking of writing?
Why keep a note book?
How may symbolisms be used in a play?

How do I pick characters for a play?

How important is detail in creating a play?

How do I go about developing a character?

Of what value is having a major climax in mind rather early in the creation of a play?

How soon should a playwright let the audience in on a secret of consequence to the plot?

How does a playwright's individuality show in his work?

Should a scenario be written before attempting to write the dialogue?

What makes for good dialogue?

What good can come of re-writing?

Why collaborate?

How necessary is a try-out to a play's success?

Should a playwright 'write down' to the public or expect the public to 'grow up' to the playwright?

What characterizes the playwright as an artist?

Are playwrights born or made?"

Miller makes no attempt to provide definitive answers to these questions, but the fact that they are clearly derived from the processes of practising playwrights gives them considerable credibility. That is to say, it is reasonable to assume that as questions demanding some kind of answer from each writer, they are generally deserving of consideration. If the novice playwright should feel confused by the plethora of unanswered questions it is not an indication that satisfactory answers cannot be found. It simply means that further research is needed

- research which asks playwrights, themselves, how they go about their work and how they would speak to a beginner wishing to develop as a playwright. The present study is an attempt to fulfil that need.

III QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Question One

(How did you learn to write plays?)

A. An Analysis of Responses

Respondents cited three principal factors in their own development as playwrights - practical experience in writing, instruction and/or experience in various aspects of theatre work other than writing, and exposure to the work of other playwrights. In addition, responses to this question indicated several other significant factors, including formal instruction in playwriting, experience in writing in other literary forms, collegial advice, analysis of one's own work and collaboration.

The most frequently cited answer came from a total of 83 respondents who said that they learned to write plays "by writing". As one respondent put it, "As a child I wrote plays, as a teenager I wrote plays, as an adult I wrote plays . . . ." Of this total, many did not specify a particular kind of playwriting experience, but, 19 mentioned the process of trial-and-error and 17 referred to their experiences in writing for a specific company, performer or director. 5 citations favoured amateur theatre groups as "clients" for whom they had written plays. One mentioned writing "as a student". Practical experience in writing plays was, therefore, the most widely credited factor in the development of respondents as playwrights.

Most learned, "By trying to write [a play] - - and trying and trying."

Many respondents cited experience and/or instruction in one or more aspects of theatre work apart from writing as being important to them in learning to write plays. The total number of citations in this category was 98, but it should be pointed out that some respondents cited more than one branch of theatre production, thereby inflating this total somewhat. A clearer picture of the importance of this kind of experience can be gained by a consideration of the number of citations referring to each particular area. Acting was cited by 49 respondents, directing by 18, variety of experience by 12, monitoring rehearsals of one's own or of other writers' plays by 4 and other single areas (included under the "individual perspectives" section, later) by 5. 10 of these citations referred to the receiving of instruction in a general program of theatre education (mainly in universities). These programs included instruction in theatre history (2), the "history of ideas" (1) and "all academic aspects of theatre" (1).

The citations included a number of comments arguing for the importance of this kind of experience in the education of playwrights. One respondent said, for example, "I believe practical knowledge of the theatre is virtually a pre-requisite for writing for it." Another said, "The best route to playwriting is the theatre." And yet another wrote of, "Learning to imagine the stage in all its specifics, rather than dreaming a movie."

The third answer to receive support from a considerable majority of respondents referred to the value of having gained exposure to the work of other playwrights. Many of these respondents specified that this was not a passive and uncritical exposure, however. They learned by seeing or reading both "good" or "classical" plays and, also, "bad" ones and by analyzing what they had seen or read. Of the 83 citations in this category, 42 specified that they had benefitted by reading plays and 41 credited their experiences in watching plays in performance. Some respondents mentioned both reading and watching. One referred to having listened to radio plays and 2 specified film and television. One citation referred to the usefulness of watching the same play at several performances. The importance of exposure to, and a study of, a wide range of plays was emphasized by respondents, including one who, "Read every produced and published play I could find."

In addition to these three very heavily supported answers, the questionnaire elicited several points which were shared by groups of respondents. Foremost among these, was the group of citations (27) giving credit to formal instruction in playwriting. This included 10 who took courses or followed university programs and 7 who participated in workshops or seminars organized by professional associations or educational institutions (primarily universities and theatre schools). One respondent "found teachers". Typical of comments acknowledging the benefits of formal instruction was one which stated, "It was an excellent course and I learned a great deal from it."

A total of 18 citations spoke of learning to write plays through the experience gained by writing in other literary forms. For example, one respondent said, "I branched from fiction to playwriting out of plain curiosity to attempt a new form." In addition to "fiction", other forms mentioned were "short stories", "monologues", "revue", "poetry", "songs", and "radio and TV".

Having a play workshopped was cited as an important learning experience by 15 respondents. The emphasis, here, was on the value of the performers' contribution. As one respondent put it, "Working with a director and professional actors is very helpful."

The same number of respondents (15) said that they were still learning. For them, the learning process continues as a "life-time committment". One said, "I don't know if I ever really learned."

Some learned by considering the advice and comments of "trusted" colleagues or associates, most notably directors and dramaturgs. One respondent mentioned having been "influenced by fine directors" and another spoke of "finding a kind mentor who had the knowledge because he was a playwright himself". There were 14 citations in this group.

Working in collaboration with others was germane to the development of 13 respondents. Of these, 7 referred specifically to participation in collective creation as a part of their collaborative experience.

Analyzing and/or re-writing one's own work was cited as

valuable for learning by 12 respondents.

For 9 respondents, it was important to have read about playwrights and playwriting. Specific books which were mentioned in this context were The Art of Dramatic Writing by L. Egri, Playwriting by William Archer and The Screenwriter's Workbook by Syd Field. Other authors cited were Erik Bentley and Walter Kerr.

7 respondents learned to write plays by studying literature, including drama among other forms.

Of great value to another 7 respondents, was the experience of seeing one's work performed in front of an audience. The emphasis here was primarily on the importance of the audience reaction to the play.

In addition to these points, a number of observations were made by smaller numbers of respondents, but which seem to have a more general relevance than their numbers might imply. For example, 6 citations mentioned the importance of listening to the way people talk. These included the observation both of "realistic" speech and of particularly "expressive" speech. One respondent valued "mastery of language".

5 respondents learned by responding to an innate interest and/or ability in specific aspects of playwriting, such as story-telling, speech patterns and visual elements.

4 respondents benefitted from having received formal instruction in writing in non-dramatic forms.

Writing plays for young audiences was cited 4 times as a valuable learning experience.

3 respondents learned by staging productions or readings of their own plays (for audiences).

3 citations valued experiences in working on new scripts (either in production or in workshop situations) as a director and/or as a dramaturg.

3 citations referred to the value of reading widely, beyond the field of dramatic literature.

2 respondents learned much by withstanding failures and criticism.

2 learned by being "an observer of life".

2 learned by "working with an understanding theatre company".

2 learned through play (ie., "Playing games" and dramatic play in childhood).

A number of citations were found to be sufficiently different from other comments to warrant their being included separately as "individual perspectives". Some of these refer to concepts not mentioned by other respondents; others provide a unique point of view on frequently mentioned ideas. These individuals learned to write plays in the following ways:

- by teaching oneself "classical form" in drama,
- by "suffering",
- by studying broadcasting,
- by working on TV and film production,
- through dramatic "physical and emotional" experiences in childhood,
- by teaching actors, directors and writers,

- by "doing performance art",
- by communicating with colleagues,
- by working in improvisational theatre,
- by having been "a play scout . . . a playwrights' agent, and a television drama story editor",
- by "trying to be a person",
- by "writing to express myself when nobody seemed to understand",
- by being "employed as play reader at a theatre which specialized in Canadian plays",
- by "composing for them",
- by "being playwright-in-residence twice",
- "with the help of people who respected my voice",
- by "experimenting with snatches of real overheard conversations, and attempting to discover what was really being said",
- by being "a drama critic for two years",
- by "working as piano player, musical director and young company co-ordinator" and as a "song writer",
- by "reading comic books".

Included, also, were three related comments:

- "Formal writing education at University was factory-like and valueless",
- "Playwriting is a craft and like any other craft it has certain basic principles which can be learned",
- "I started with short, episodic scenes, concentrating on one scene at a time . . . . I used what I liked from TV

and film".

B. Implications for the School Program

The relevance of these responses to the school program rests on the assumption that factors important in the development of practising playwrights will also be significant for students who are engaged in learning about the processes of the playwright's art. This assumption is supported by comments made by several respondents in answering this question, including the one who said, "I believe practical knowledge of the theatre is virtually a pre-requisite for writing for it." Furthermore, the factors cited most frequently by respondents as important in their own development - practical experience in writing, a background in theatre production and exposure to the work of other playwrights - are included among the most frequent answers to questions nine and ten in which respondents are asked to make recommendations to educators. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that factors which have helped respondents to develop as playwrights will also be useful for students of the art form.

The importance of practical experience in writing, cited by a large majority of respondents, can be taken as a clear indication that the school program should be centered on the students' own writing experience even if there is no direct intention to prepare students for a career in playwriting. An analysis of responses to other questions (particularly question nine) will produce a variety of suggested exercises and criteria which can provide specific direction for this experience. But whether it

be closely controlled or simple trial-and-error, the experience of writing should be both extensive and central to the program.

From the large number of citations crediting the value of practical experience and instruction in theatre production, it can be concluded that the student should be encouraged to participate in the production of plays as actor, as director and in any number of other capacities. If the playwriting course is a unit of study within a broad program of dramatic education, this production experience may be identified as a pre-requisite for admission to the playwriting component. Within the playwriting unit, students may participate in the production of one another's scripts. At any rate, the survey results clearly indicate that, for most students, it would be a waste of time to try writing for the stage without a firm understanding of theatre practice.

The importance of a wide exposure to the work of other playwrights also has clear implications for the school program. Students should be encouraged to read a large number of plays and to see (and hear) as many as possible in production. Furthermore, students should have an opportunity to analyze and discuss these plays. Once again, it may be possible to identify the study of plays as a pre-requisite for admission to the playwriting component. However, responses to other questions will make it clear that a certain amount of this work must be done within the playwriting unit. For example, with respect to Questions nine and ten, several respondents were concerned that lessons learned from the plays under study should be applied

directly to the students' own work.

The group of citations which acknowledged the value of formal playwriting instruction can be taken as encouragement for the development of school programs. Because some courses and instructors have proven particularly valuable to certain playwrights, it may be possible to identify bell-weather programs for study and emulation by other educators.

Other factors cited by groups of respondents offer alternative approaches and exercises for students and teachers in a school setting. Students may benefit from opportunities to write in other literary forms, to have a play workshopped or performed, to receive the advice of a knowledgeable associate (sometimes, obviously, this would be the playwriting teacher), to work in collaboration with others, to analyze and re-write their own work, to read about playwrights and playwriting and to study literature, broadly. It may be reassuring to student and teacher alike to note that several practising playwrights consider that they are still learning.

The many factors cited by smaller numbers of respondents or recorded as individual perspectives are indicative of the wide range of learning opportunities which students may respond to and of the broad base of life experience and artistic technique involved in the process of writing plays. The school program should recognize the great divergence possible in both of these areas.

Question Two

(What is your chief motivation for writing a play?)

A. An Analysis of Responses

A desire to communicate and an enjoyment of the writing process, in itself, were the chief motivating factors for the greatest numbers of respondents. Significance was also attributed to an unspecified compulsion, to an affinity for drama as a preferred medium and to the potential for financial reward and recognition. Formal commissions and a love of the theatre motivated some writers. Others wanted to make specific kinds of contributions to theatre and society. For two, motivation varied from play to play.

A total of 99 citations indicated that a desire to communicate was an important motivation for writing a play. Of these, 42 spoke of wanting to make a statement. Playwriting was "a vehicle to express my views of the world, people, etc." This group included respondents who had "something to say", or a desire to "express", "share", or "communicate". Three respondents used the word to "educate". The emphasis in many of these citations was on expressing an important or strongly felt vision, rather than on simply conveying an intellectual "message". For example, one respondent wanted "to illuminate aspects of the human condition".

Other citations (26) in this category spoke of wanting to reach and affect an audience. These included respondents who

wished to "connect" or to "make an audience feel" or to "speak to people"" or to "provoke thought". One wanted to "help lift them from . . . cocooned perspectves". Another wanted to "remind them that despite everything life has compassion, humanity, joy, laughter and love".

Of the 99, a group of 17 wanted to "entertain" and 9 wanted to "tell a story". Some of the various aspects of the desire to communicate through playwriting were drawn together by one respondent who wrote of "a desire to make a statement I believe in to a large audience in a way which will entertain them and, I hope, provoke them into considering the human condition as reflected by my play".

Another large group of responses (91) cited an enjoyment of the writing process, itself, as a motivating factor. Of these, 26 valued the opportunity to develop an important or interesting idea, a theme, a character, a subject, a situation, or a feeling. The emphasis in these citations was on having a compelling impulse and then exploring the area of interest. This motivation was quite distinct from any associated desire to then express the results of this exploration. Some of these respondents pointed out that, because the process of writing a play was so long and painstaking, they felt that the initial thought has to be compelling enough to sustain the playwright, throughout. However, the main thrust of the comments in this category was towards an appreciation of the enjoyable and enlightening process of writing. For example, one respondent said, ". . . as the idea

takes shape over a period of time I begin to understand why it's significant."

"To have fun" was the motivation cited by 17 of the 91 in this category. These responses referred to an enjoyment of the writing process, per se, and a satisfaction with the eventual products. It made one "happy" and gave another "joy". The idea was put forward that the lengthy process of playwriting needed to be sustained by an enjoyment of the process.

Another group of 11 respondents enjoyed another aspect of the playwriting experience, the opportunity to be involved in a creative process which extends beyond the initial act of writing into other areas of theatre practice including the actual performances. This included the exploration of "a style or theatrical technique". 2 citations referred to this process as "magic".

Another group in this category wanted to "get to the heart of things". They found satisfaction in exploring "a situation death". These citations referred to the experiencing of something profound and fundamental. Although an expressive desire was associated with these citations to some extent, the emphasis was clearly on the writing process as a kind of concentrated reflection revealing an image of truth (as compared with convention and cliche).

The remaining citations in this category included 4 references to the function of the playwriting process as a medium for helping the writer to deal with the world. As one put it, "Writing plays focuses my ideas and feelings about the world and

myself." Another 3 wrote about the creative satisfaction they feel doing "something I do well". 3 regarded the process as an emotional outlet, "to vent my thoughts, my frustrations, my desires, my love and my fears". 3 liked to explore human psychology. 2 enjoyed learning about playwriting and developing their skills. 2 said simply, "I love it". 2 valued the chance to "understand better . . . a person or a situation or a moment". One enjoyed "creating an imaginary world". One satisfied a personal need for "discipline". One wrote for a love of the characters. One said the motivation was "the work, itself". One appreciated the opportunity "to grow". One wrote to satisfy a curiosity "about how the piece will look on stage".

A significant group (24) cited money, "the need to make a living", as an important motivation. "As Ira Levin says in Deathtrap, 'We're all looking for the one set, four character, money maker.'" In contrast to this view, it should be noted that 4 respondents made a point of saying that "it certainly isn't money" that motivates their writing. 3 of these emphasized the difficulty of earning a living as a playwright in Canada, while one said it is simply not the primary motive.

An unspecified compulsion was cited by 15 respondents. Comments in this group included "necessity", "I just have to write plays", and "It satisfies my creative urges".

An affinity for drama as a preferred medium was a motivating factor for another 15 respondents. Included were citations comparing drama to other media and/or referring to specific elements of drama such as characters and conflict as motivating

factors. As one put it, "some subjects are more conducive to dialogue". Another wrote, "Theatre excites me more than any other artistic area."

A desire to gain recognition, or, as one respondent wrote, "to impress my friends", was an important motivator for 9 writers.

Another group (8) wrote in pursuit of various social goals. For example, one said, "I tend to be issue oriented and choose the characters and situations to advance that." Another wanted to "create an event for my community about my community". Social objectives included the desire to promote children's theatre (2), to make the world a better place by overcoming "social and political problems" (4), and to add to the repertory of plays by women (1).

Being asked to write a new script, with all the attendant "deadlines and guilt" motivated 6 respondents, quite apart from any income associated with such a commission.

A love of plays and the theatre motivated 5. As one put it, "Drama's immediacy provides an unutterable thrill."

A wish to make a contribution to the Art was cited by 2, "something that lives on it's own".

A desire to provide specific roles for oneself or for one's company motivated 2.

"To achieve something in fantasy that cannot be or generally is not achieved in real life", was important for 2.

2 specified that, for them, motivation was different for every play.

A number of "individual perspectives" were recorded in response to this question. These included the following motivations:

- "to create a unique effect",
- "to be the first person to hear that story that is floating around right in front of our eyes",
- "to create a meaningful event or rather the potential for a meaningful event",
- "to give a voice to my characters",
- "to repeat success",
- dissatisfaction with others' work and feeling one should "fish or cut bait",
- "one hopes to find that [money-making] play through an honest reaction to the world and an insight into its shortcomings".

Other individual comments included:

- "I'm always motivated, but not always active",
- "It is certainly not the pleasure of working in Canadian Theatre - or with actors or directors . . .",
- "Life is excitement. Excitement is Drama. Drama is life. I write because I am. Sometimes my imaginative 'Being' takes the form of a play".

B. Implications for the School Program

As with the first question, these responses are relevant only insofar as the experience of the playwright can be seen to be applicable to the student. Consequently, the group of

professional playwrights who write for money are clearly pursuing a motive which a vast majority of students cannot realistically share, although, even this factor may be important for the occasional student who aims at a career as a writer.

Of greater interest to most students and teachers is the fact that the largest number of respondents were motivated to write plays by considerations which are fully accessible to students and which are also compatible with the goals of a general program of drama in education. The desire to communicate, to express oneself, is a universal impulse to which most drama programs are dedicated. Students can be expected to respond warmly to this additional outlet for self-expression in a context which has prepared them to cherish such opportunities.

Also important for school programs is the enjoyment which so many respondents found in the writing process itself. The satisfaction which can be had from developing one's own ideas and exploring an area of one's own interest is as fully accessible to the student as it is to the practising playwright. Once again, school drama programs are already committed to encouraging this kind of enjoyment. Drama is among the few school subjects for which one frequently stated goal is "to have fun".

Students can also be expected to appreciate an opportunity to be involved in a co-operative creative process, because this kind of experience is central to most school drama programs. The same can be said in respect to the group of respondents who felt an affinity to drama as a preferred medium.

These and other motives such as a desire to gain recognition and a wish to pursue social goals are clearly as apt to affect students as professionals and should make it possible to avoid the make-work attitude feared by some respondents in their answers to question nine.

Question Three

(Do you write within the discipline of a routine working day?)

A. An Analysis of Responses

The vast majority of respondents reported that, at least some of the time, they did write within the discipline of a routine working day. However, a significant minority stated that they did not do so. Comments associated with these answers indicated that many writers who would like to work in this way are prevented from doing so by the demands of other kinds of employment or by domestic (family) considerations. It also became evident that, for a large number of respondents, the routine of writing for a given number of hours every day was seen as a phase in a larger time framework covering the entire process of creating a play from inception to final re-writes. On average, respondents wrote approximately six hours per day although the range of specific times was very broad.

A total of 108 respondents answered either "yes" or "sometimes" to this question. The "same number of hours at the same time on the same days. Always." This was the goal of one respondent, reflecting the general adherence to some form of discipline.

A number of citations (38) answered "no". For some, this was a matter of choice. As one respondent put it, "I write when I want to or when I have to. I cannot plan and structure creativity." Another said that the process was "uncontrollable". For others, however, external conditions prevented the adoption

of a regular routine. Of those who answered either "no" or "sometimes", 41 reported that the need to earn a living at another occupation, and/or the demands of their personal lives prevented them from full-time writing on a routine schedule. One respondent wrote, "I've had to condition myself to write whenever an opening, day or night, occurs".

Although many of those answering "yes" spoke of their routine as unalterable, others (38) indicated that a period of concentrated, daily writing could be included as a phase in a larger, less routinized, time-framework extending over the development of a given play. Of these, 28 preferred to work in "bursts" or "binges". To some extent this represents an alternative to routine. As one citation stated, "I write . . . when some sort of urge compels me." On the other hand, during this period of intensive work, a kind of routine seems to establish itself until the completion of a draft (for example). "One . . . becomes involved and wants to stick with it." Another group of 13 responses suggested an incremental approach to the issue of routine. For example, one said, "The play exists first in the mind, as a concept, for a long time. Bits and pieces may get written at odd times. Then comes a first draft - a sustained effort."

A group of 28 respondents contributed comments indicating a preference for the discipline of a routine working day and/or recommending this approach to others. One said, "I wish that I could establish a formal pattern." Another advised that writers "establish [a] routine . . . same hours each day."

A group of 7 respondents didn't actually begin to "write" until the play had been thoroughly developed mentally. "Before that time I'd just be hacking out words . . . ."

The use of self-imposed quotas was reported by 6 respondents. One specified, "anywhere from 3 to 10 [pages] depending on which draft I'm on."

3 wrote of the need to learn when to take a break.

2 said they worked all the time.

2 said that their approach wasn't for everybody.

2 stated that the more one writes the better one becomes.

One respondent advised part-time writers to earn their living in non-demanding jobs to leave energy for writing.

Specific daily working hours were specified by 44 respondents. The average daily total was approximately six hours. However, the range was extremely broad - from 1 1/2 hours to 24. Some specified a five-day working week, others, six or seven. Some worked evenings and weekends. One wrote on sabbaticals. A number of respondents broke their routines up in such a way as to begin the day with one kind of work (eg. creative work) and then move on to another type (eg. pure typing) and then to yet another (eg. business). Some respondents mentioned that they would extend a routine writing day when necessary, to meet deadlines. "All night if I have to."

B. Implications for the School Program

Because most practising playwrights choose to write within the discipline of a routine working day at least some of the time, it is reasonable to conclude that most student writers will benefit from a similar approach. However it should be recognized, within the school program, that a number of playwrights find this kind of routine to be incompatable with their creative impulses. Presumably, therefore, within each group of students there will be a small number who will not respond well to such discipline and for whom special allowance must be made. Nevertheless most students will likely find a daily writing routine to be more productive than an unstructured approach, and students should be encouraged to try to develop some kind of routine before abandoning the idea.

On the other hand, the experience of respondents indicates that there must be some flexibility within the routine to respond to the incremental nature of the writing process. In the early stages of work on a play, the student may finish many working sessions without writing a word of dialogue, or even having reached any firm conclusions about plot or character. Once the plot has been mapped out and/or the characters have been clearly developed, the routine may have to be expanded to allow for an intensive period of work during which the first draft is completed. This period may then be followed by a hiatus during which no further work is done. The routine may then be resumed quite methodically for the process of re-writing. At any rate,

the general usefulness of a writing routine should not be diminished by a lack of flexibility in its application.

The number of working hours to be included in a student's daily routine will depend, not only on the personal needs and abilities of the writer but also on the scope and duration of the playwriting unit.

Question Four

(How should the student pick characters for a play?)

A. An Analysis of Responses

Many suggestions were offered by respondents in answer to this question. Principal among these were recommendations to model characters on real-life people, to choose characters which illustrate the theme or premise of the play and to choose characters which are essential to the plot or story. A significant minority recommended that characters be allowed to develop organically instead of being "picked".

The suggestion that characters be modelled on real-life people was put forward in 50 citations. They emphasized the need to use people personally known by the writer rather than characters from other writers' work. As one respondent said, "Why not pick someone you know and transpose him/her to another situation?" Others suggested "observation" and "life studies". "One of the best resources for students", wrote one, "is each other, the other's responses to various aspects of life, according to a given focus".

32 respondents recommended choosing characters who illustrate the theme or premise of the play. One wrote, "First comes the concept - the question involved, and with it characters who embody the opposing sides of the conflict". The idea was voiced that characters may emerge for this purpose rather than being "chosen". For example, one said, "They evolve from the needs of the play."

29 respondents advised the student to choose characters which are essential to the plot or story (or "situation" as some put it). Citations suggested that, in keeping with this principle, each character will have a good reason for being in the play. One stated, "That way they will all contribute to the evolution of the play, rather than having been parachuted in as expositionary contrivances."

A group of 25 citations argued that characters should be allowed to develop organically rather than being "picked". Although some writers, as indicated above, did not consider this concept to be at odds with other principles governing their choice of characters, this group seemed to feel differently. Therefore, this point may be seen as representing an alternative approach to playwriting. A number of respondents in this group said, in effect, "You don't pick the characters; the characters pick you". Emphasis was placed on two aspects of this issue. On the one hand, the characters initiate the play by "demanding" to be written. On the other hand, the characters, once "chosen", should be permitted to "take off without undue interference from the playwright". As to the question of choice, one respondent wrote, "Every character that a writer will ever use is already inside of him."

This comment was echoed by 14 citations which recommended that the student choose characters which he or she could identify with. Emphasis was placed on the need to find the characters within oneself, so that the writer can then present a set of characters who represent various aspects of him/herself. One

respondent wrote, "You only write about yourself, anyway". Another said, "You become a chameleon - jump from one character to another". Yet another pointed out that "every voice is your own".

The character-centered approach to playwriting was complimented by 13 citations stating that the character can (and for some, should) come first. In this way, plot develops out of and reveals character.

13 citations provided a variety of aesthetic considerations which should affect the choice of characters. Of these, 8 advised students to select characters which offer variety or contrasting values. As one said, they should be chosen "with an eye to enhancing the comedy or the drama inherent in the conflict of dissimilar characters holding dissimilar ideas". 5 suggested that characters be selected to sustain interest or satisfy other aesthetic needs. For example, one wrote, "Extra characters may be needed for theatrical reasons - balance, romantic interest, comic relief, etc."

"Imagination" was cited as a factor in the choice of characters by 11 respondents. One said the student should select "whatever characters come most strongly through his imagination".

11 respondents advised students to choose characters which interest or excite them. As one said, the characters should "irritate, stimulate, elevate, debase or otherwise affect them".

8 citations recommended the creation of composite characters, by molding the characteristics of two or three people known to the writer into one.

7 respondents advised students to be economical in their use of characters. One wrote, "Characters . . . should not be realized until it becomes essential to introduce them." On a practical note, one said, "The economic facts of life load the dice against the chances of professional production of a play that has more than a handful of characters."

Another 7 citations mentioned the possibility of choosing characters through research, with an emphasis on such courses as news stories, biographies and photographs. This kind of research was seen as quite distinct from the "life studies" approach suggested, above.

The writer should choose characters which matter greatly to him or her, according to 7 citations. "They should be people he or she wants to write about . . . . "

5 respondents emphasized that the playwright needs to filter or develop all characters, even those selected from real life.

5 citations recommended that writers create characters out of what they know about people. The emphasis was on using one's general experience with people rather than on adopting specific individuals as models. One said that the characters should be "rooted in the student's experience and understanding but <u>not</u> like the people she knows, entirely".

5 repondents said that there were no rules and that the word "should" should be avoided.

4 citations recommended that the student choose (or develop) strong, individualized, full characters.

4 suggested choosing characters the writer would like to learn more about, or whose story he/she would like to explore.

4 recommended that the student avoid such sources as television, films, other plays and novels.

3 advised the student to begin with the external qualities of a character, including the "visual" element.

3 suggested the student try writing parts for certain actors. Alternatively, the student could work with actors to develop characters through improvization.

3 cautioned the student against stereo-typing.

3 stipulated that the character must have the potential for an inner conflict, or an unique story.

2 warned the student not to choose characters arbitrarily.

2 pointed out that specific characters may prove ineffective and have to be discarded.

2 answered, simply, "I don't know".

In addition to the wide range of "shared" opinions enumerated above, this question gave rise to a large number of "individual perspectives". Many of the following comments touch on various "shared" ideas, but each of them was found to vary sufficiently from a more general point to warrant inclusion separately. Respondents advised:

- allow for an unplanned "surprise" character,
- each student will find his/her own way,
- pick characters whose "motivation" interests you,
- characters must "feel right" for the specific play,
- avoid characters who are merely "lecturers",

- don't portray identifiable people until they are dead,
- try to build characters rather than pick them,
- in choosing characters for children's theatre, get to know the type of character that appeals to children,
- try to have "fun" with drama,
- choose characters which are believable,
- choose a character with a goal he/she is determined to achieve "against all odds",
- "Non-chief characters can be chosen to put particular pressure on the chief characters . . . .",
- they should choose "anyone who interests them",
- one can start from "the abstract (Ziggy Stardust, KISS)",
- "Just start somewhere", there are many possibilities,
- "Generally, in my mind, there is a character or characters in a situation - the two seem to go together",
- "I don't think he should pick characters for a play. He should be interested in interaction, not character",
- "Start with the world; edit later",
- "Either by creating them arbitrarily - 7 characters: name, age, home, work, good trait, bad trait, physical trait, then play with them, or decide what she wants to say, then who she needs to say it to. Both are valid".
- "Choose a distinctive speech rhythm as a diving board to all the rest of it",
- "The main thing to remember is that all the characters must be actively involved in the conflict. Nobody

should be along for the ride simply because they're convenient",

- "They don't pick - they create",
- "I was going to say they pick you . . . but that's a cop out",
- choose "People you like and can learn to love. People you love already are too close . . . . People you dislike . . . are an imposition on the audience - who wants to spend two hours locked in a room with objects of contempt?",
- "When I teach writing, I suggest that people free write until they find a character they 'fall in love with' and then develop other characters to follow that main character",
- "He should be . . . not all bad and not all good - somebody who is doing something - preferably with something unusual - maybe a physical or a mental handicap . . . out of harmony with things",
- Choose characters which are "unpredictable but true to themselves".

B. Implications for the School Program

Responses to this question produced a large number of points which the student writer would be advised to bear in mind while selecting characters for a play. Most of these can be brought to the students' attention exactly in the form in which they appear above. It would be redundant to reproduce them all here.

However, the three most frequently mentioned considerations clearly deserve a special place in the playwriting course. They should be specifically reflected in exercises, instruction and critiques. Students should try modelling characters on real-life people at least some of the time, possibly combining two or more models to create a composite character. Similarly, students should be encouraged to populate their plays with characters who illustrate the theme or premise of each play and who are essential to the plot or story. The clear implication is that, at least some of the time, the students should be encouraged to develop the structure of their play before making firm decisions about the characters. Then, they should draw upon their observation of real-life people to provide agents for the play's action.

On the other hand, it must also be recognized that this approach is regarded as untenable by a significant minority of respondents for whom plot is of value only as an extension of character and for whom the character chooses the writer rather than vice versa. This alternative approach should be accommodated within the school program for two reasons. Firstly, the experience of these writers should not be overlooked if the program is to give a fair overview of the field. Secondly, it is likely that each group of students will include a number of individuals for whom a character-based approach will be more productive than a plot-based one. Consequently, students should be encouraged to begin the writing process, from time to time, by

taking into consideration the people, or types of people, who interest them and who arouse their strongest feelings.

Responses to questions five and six indicate that, in most instances, plot and character develop simultaneously in such a way that they become highly interdependent even inseparable. It may be most useful to consider responses to the present question in the light of that general perspective.

Question Five

(Should the student write a scenario before beginning to write the dialogue?)

A. An Analysis of Responses

A substantial majority of respondents agreed that the student should write a scenario before beginning to write the dialogue. A significant minority recommended that the student should try both ways - beginning with a scenario and beginning with the dialogue. Another significatnt minority answered either "maybe" or "sometimes". Smaller numbers of respondents rejected the use of a written plan, answering either "not necessarily" or "no", or recommending an organic development of the play based on character. A wide range of comments accompanied these general recommendations, including suggestions that the scenario should be allowed to change in the course of writing dialogue and that each student should be encouraged to develop his or her own personal way of working.

A total of 71 respondents answered "yes" to this question. Of these, some were qualified by comments such as "usually helps", but most were uncompromising in their recommendatioin of this proceedure, using such terms as "absolutely", "without question" and "an absolute must". One respondent wrote, "It helps them to think about their story, to think the problem through." Another said, "Without the proper groundwork, the finished product may never be structurally sound."

26 citations recommended that the student should try more than one approach. Sometimes, they should begin with a scenario; at other times, they should begin with the dialogue. As one respondent put it, "It [a scenario] can be a great help . . . . But it can also be fun and instructional to write a scene in full, then looking at it and deciding where it's going to go. . . . Every playwright should experience that at least once."

22 citations said either "maybe" or "sometimes". Some comments were relatively noncomittal - "If he feels like it". Others spoke of the advantages and disadvantages of the scenario. One wrote, "Sometimes you have to discipline [the characters] within a scenario structure to keep them on track." Another cautioned that "The scenario approach should never be made mandatory until at least a scene or even a first draft has been written".

"Not necessarily" was the resonse of 7 writers. One said, "A play can grow out of a comment, a character, a joke, an incident . . . . "

7 respondents recommended that the student begin with the characters and let the rest of the play develop organically.

6 respondents said, simply, "no". One warned, "A war between your 'plan' and your intuition should be avoided".

The citations mentioned, above, represent the range of direct responses to the question. In addition to these, many comments were recorded which reflected on the nature and use (or non-use) of the scenario. Of these, 26 pointed out that the scenario may change in the writing of the dialogue and, where

necessary, should be allowed to do so. The general feeling, here, was that the scenario should be seen as a map or guide rather than as a fixed plan. One wrote, "Apprentice playwrights are too inclined to treat the working sketch or a scenario as carved in stone."

20 respondents recommended that each student should be encouraged to develop his or her own way of working. One wrote, "It has been said that there are different strokes for different folks".

10 respondents said that, at some point in the process (nearer the beginning than the end), the playwright should know where the play is going, even if working without a scenario. For example, the climax and the ending should be clear.

10 citations stated that a scenario was valuable in that it saved re-writing, wasted time, frustration, confusion and a loss of good ideas.

10 asserted that there were no fixed rules, "shoulds", or formulae.

6 mentioned that a scenario helped the writer to avoid the "common beginners' fault" of aimless "chatter" or "rambling".

5 expressed a preference for beginning the process with one or more characters. One said, for example, "Let your characters live their lives. Watch where they take you."

4 said, in effect, "The main thing I like to have clear in my mind when I begin is where it is supposed to end."

4 mentioned that the writing of a scenario sometimes includes the writing of some dialogue.

4 stated a preference for writing a full treatment of the plot (more extensive than a scenario) before beginning to write dialogue.

4 said that structure or dramatic action should be determined before it is "fleshed out" with dialogue.

3 said that a scenario allowed the writer to concentrate on the dialogue, thereby allowing it to come easier.

3 placed particular emphasis on the need to know why one is writing.

2 recommended the use of index cards to diagram the action, when needed. For example, one card can be prepared for each scene and then re-arranged.

2 saw the writing of a scenario as a way of freeing the mind to allow for the addition of new thoughts.

2 said, "I don't think it matters."

Many "individual perspectives" were recorded, each shedding a slightly different light on the question. These included:

- although a play needs a scenario, a single, "exploratory" scene can be written without one,
- a scenario should include "beginning, ending, a summary of each scene, specific lines you want to use and anything else you can think of",
- a personal method was to "write entire scenes and decide on their order later",

- it is particularly important to know act endings before writing much of the play,
- a scenario should include the number and relationships of characters and generally where they are "going",
- a good exercise is to write "pure dialogue" without any directions or action,
- at a certain point, once started, the play "writes itself",
- "dialogue written before the plot is fully ripe . . . will not fit snugly into the play - but serves as an exercise to teach the craft",
- "an alternative approach is to focus on the conflict or comic premise and build up the story and characters around that focus" starting with key scenes,
- dialogue should be the primary focus because it is a "medium" in and of itself,
- writing a scenario and other forms of treatment can serve as a "loosening-up" process,
- a helpful exercise is the writing of a monologue for each character (quite apart from its place in the plot),
- although a scenario is usually helpful, there are times of inspiration when it would be redundant,
- before writing, the student should decide on the genre ("comedy, tragedy, etc."),
- one suggested exercise was to write a few lines of dialogue around a random sentence, then try to link them up with another random sentence,

- after the overall outline has been determined, each scene needs an internal outline,
- it might be more useful to think in "images" instead of scenario,
- "anything is more valuable than blank paper",
- try writing the scenario as a short story,
- "The thing is, you see scenes and, especially at the beginning, you don't know what the heck they are about; you just know they fit. You must encourage the young writers to put it all down because it is easier to arrange when it is on paper",
- "I find I work better from the rough scenario; that way there are still some surprises for me as I write",
- "I. . . do a treatment outline first for a director and value their impressions, suggestions before I begin",
- "A scenario is extremely useful when correcting the dramatic structure but may be too analytical at an early stage",
- "There should be a lot of playing around with ideas, and this can be applied to scenarios or dialogue until something clicks",
- "I find that writing the dialogue is the way that I discover what happens so I couldn't write a scenario first",
- "sometimes, if the student really knows what he/she is writing about (the story, characters, etc.), he/she can

begin writing scenes as scenes, but I don't recommend it for the student",

- "It is important to know . . . not just physical action but character inner development",
- "I would recommend they do exercises (dialogue) using the characters they want to write about. Anything which inhibits the creative process should be quickly discarded."

B. Implications for the School Program

It is clear from responses to this question that students should be encouraged to write scenarios before beginning to write dialogue, at least some of the time. The nature of the required scenario can vary from a loose plan to a detailed treatment of the plot. But the importance of knowing the basic structure and direction of the piece is strongly recommended. However, there is a chance that such a plan could stifle the creative process if it is applied inflexibly. Students should, therefore, be advised to regard the scenario as a useful but flexible guide and not as written in stone.

It is equally clear that, from time to time, students should be encouraged to begin writing dialogue without concern for the ultimate outcome. This exercise may be useful for generating ideas which can organically develop into a play, particularly within the character-based process described under question four. In other cases, it may contribute to the development of a

detailed scenario or a personal history for one of the characters.

The use (or non-use) of a scenario is evidently a very personal matter and teachers should help each student identify an approach which works well for him or her. Indeed, each writer may prefer to use different approaches when working on different plays. The search for individual ways of working should be encouraged by the school program.

Question Six

(How should the student go about developing a character?)

A. Analysis of Responses

A large number of recommendations and related comments were received in response to this question, covering many aspects of the development of a character. Foremost among these were suggestions that the students should prepare a detailed life history, observe people in real life, provide the potential for conflict, be open to changes in the character and be sure of the character's motivation. It was noted that character and plot are inextricably interrelated.

The largest group of respondents (47) recommended that the student prepare a detailed life history, at least for the main characters. As one wrote, "Imagine the character fully. And not in isolation, but in relation to other characters, in relation to seminal events of the character's life". This history was seen as including a variety of background information, such as age, sex, occupation, idiosyncracies and "what is deeply felt". The intention was not necessarily to include all of these details in the play, but rather, to allow the playwright to see the character as full and real. As one remarked, "Too often, the writer puts their own words into a character's mouth rather than allowing the character to grow on his own". Some respondents saw this preparatory work as including monologues and "out takes" - important scenes in the character's life which won't appear in

the finished play. Some considered the scenario to be an on-going tool, to be added to throughout the writing process. One recommended "For high school, I would say a minimum of five pages".

The advice put forward in answer to question four, that characters be modelled on real-life people, was reflected, here, by 28 respondents who recommended that the student develop characters by observing people in real life, "by opening the ears to nuances of speech . . . emotions", etc. Included were citations recommending the use of "familiar people" and "character studies". It was suggested that this observation will help the writer to see characters as multidimensional and to understand how they will respond in moments of dramatic potential.

A total of 20 citations spoke of the need for the characters to possess the potential for conflict and change. This potential can come into play at one point or another, particularly in crisis situations. 10 of these recommended placing the character in confrontation with an opposing character, or in a challenging situation. One said, "In struggling to overcome these obstacles your character will reveal him/her self". Conflict, therefore, was seen as a valuable way to bring out interesting and varied emotional responses and character traits. Related to this was the idea that a worthy opponent would eloquently express an opposing point of view.

Another 20 respondents voiced the opinion that character and plot are closely related and that, consequently, character development is inextricably associated with plot development.

These citations tended to give prominance to plot, with characters being developed to serve the plot. One citation explained that character can develop in the process of tying together unrelated plot elements, while another maintained that character should be the "litmus paper" for story and plot to react upon. One said, "A good idea is to . . . establish your situation first, so that you have a reference point you can compare to your everyday experience".

17 respondents advised students to be open to the character, not predetermining too much. The writer should let the characters grow on their own, within the basic "ground rules". As one said, "Trust the character's own development rather than any intellectually imposed facets or events." Another said, "If the character doesn't develop by him/herself, the writer is in trouble and should probably quit while he's ahead."

The character's motivation was of special concern to 16 respondents. As one put it, "A character will, in effect, shape and develop itself if it is allowed and encouraged to pursue its objective." This means that the playwright must first know what the characters want or need.

9 citations expressed the view that at least one or two of the main characters must be understood intuitively by the writer. Some spoke of "inhabiting" a character and others talked about "living with" a character before writing anything on paper. One said, "Intuition. Start inside. Feelings, psychological [and] spiritual drives, needs, desires". For some respondents, one way

to achieve this goal was through the preparation of a life history as described above.

8 respondents saw character development as a process of discovery. Their idea was to aim for the core of the person in a process of revelation comparable to peeling an onion. One said, "Crawl into their skin, feel their feelings; listen to what THEY tell you." Another said, "We discover character through action. What a character does defines him/herself far more than what they say about themselves self-consciously".

7 stated that, once the plot is established, the character will grow in the actual writing of dialogue. In these citations, the stress was divided between the importance of dialogue and the importance of the writing process in developing character. One said, "In dialogue. It can't hurt for the student writers to set themselves up as the voice of an interviewer or, if they wish, an antagonist."

6 advised the students to observe their own emotions and reactions and, perhaps, to give someone a "voice" like their own. One said, simply, "Look inside yourself."

6 recommended writing monologues as a useful exercise for developing a character. One suggested that the monologue express what the character might think about a given situation.

6 advised the student to begin by finding the "voice" of each character (not the writer's voice). One said, "For me, the voice is most important - to hear the character speak in his own ideosyncratic way".

6 pointed out that characters are developed through a long process of re-writing. They presented the concept of "layering" in which each re-write brings new discoveries and depths. One wrote, "Through re-writing, discussion, workshopping . . . the characters gradually accumulate more detailed traits, thoughts, objectives".

5 respondents advised students to differentiate their characters by making some characteristics of each contradictory. Included, here, are two ideas, on the one hand the importance of differentiating characters one from the other and, on the other hand, the concept that some contradiction should be "built into" an otherwise consistant character.

5 citations suggested that there may be a difference in approach needed for major and for minor characters. The idea was put forward that major characters will be known fully and that minor ones will be distinguished with fewer "brush strokes".

5 said that working with actors can help in character development. They spoke of "workshopping a first draft", of reading and discussing all or part of a play, and of having actors improvise from "skeletal" ideas provided by the writer. One wrote of "leaving 'room' for the individual actors to feel out the role".

4 advised making sure that the character serves the theme (or other needs) of the play.

Whereas most respondents referred to the question of how the playwright acts to create the character, 4 were concerned with how the playwright presents the character to an audience

(developing it in their eyes). Some said the character is gradually revealed to the audience by words, actions and interactions. Two said that what is not said about a character is often as important as what is said. One said that the character, himself, and other characters can tell something about the character's past. Also, how the character sees him/herself and how others see him/her is important.

4 advised that one can develop a character by digging into one's original motivation for choosing that character. (Why is he/she in the play?)

4 supported the view that "there are different approaches for different characters and certainly for different styles".

3 recommended that the student allow ample time because character development should be undertaken slowly and carefully.

3 advised keeping the character consistant (true to his/her essence) as he/she grows in such areas as style, motive and point of view.

3 recommended developing character through meticulous research. This process is closely related to, but not identical with, the preparation of a life history. One wrote, "Research the situation you're writing about . . . . A number of attractive models will present themselves for each character".

3 advised asking how each character relates to others.

3 recommended that each student do this in his/her own way. One said, "Nobody works the same way".

2 said never to borrow a character from television, film or another play.

2 recommended "dreaming" about the characters. The writer should place them in various situations in a kind of mental improvisation.

2 wrote of developing character using the elements of speech and manner.

2 recommended that characters be developed with economy. One said, "Writing a play is a matter of excluding the unnecessary".

2 advised the writer to imagine him/herself playing each character. "If I were character B, how would I respond?"

2 recommended the student "feel" and "live life". "Develop your own character."

2 cautioned against over-preparation. "You must know the background of your character . . . but . . . much has been written on this point that results in wasted time . . . . This activity has the innate danger of becoming an end in itself in lieu of actual writing."

2 said that, "Each character must be considered central, as he is to his own life, and a complete human being".

Many individual perspectives were recorded, also, each reflecting a different area of concern or point of view. They included:

- to add interest to minor characters, one can prepare horoscopes or colour analyses,
- avoid "stock" or cliche'd characters,

- central characters must never be passive; they must "act on and not be acted upon",
- basic ground rules are, "This is who you are, this is your situation, this is what you want",
- each character should be treated as if he/she were the "lead",
- make the character real in terms of his/her "human potential",
- develop characters through "personal honesty",
- "Read Aristotle",
- read Keith Johnstone's book, Improvisation,
- a lot of "self-discipline" is needed,
- internal qualities can be developed out of one or two external characteristics,
- walk around the room and physically imitate the character "to release the voice of the character",
- try to "hear and see" what you write,
- create "specific environments" for your characters,
- no character should be allowed to "compromise" the play as a whole,
- personality traits of one or more persons can be "dropped onto" a character, as long as they keep him/her within the "lines of credibility",
- "Don't worry about character development",
- "Don't repeat yourself",
- "Question and requestion" everything the character says and does as you write the scenes and dialogue,

- be willing to throw away what you might "love" but which doesn't really "work",
- "Plays of the 1980's are not necessarily about character",
- you must reveal 1. "the character's role in relation to the climax", and 2. "if they are successful or unsuccessful as people",
- one way is to think about "the character's journey within the story",
- one approach is through such improvisational (creative drama) exercises as conflict improvs, alter ego, role reversal, resolving conflicts, using one's self in creating characters, secrets, chair exercise, circle exercise, letter exercise,
- "Be absolutely honest about how you operate",
- "Write the story from each character's point of view",
- "Freefall . . . clustering . . . anything that lets the mind play",
- "Just make sure of his attitude and actions - a character develops in Doing only",
- "Put them together and write sample dialogue. Let them interact. Constantly ask questions . . . What's on their mind? . . . subtext",
- "A good starting point is to identify each as good, bad, ugly, stupid, happy, sad, mean or greedy" - for secondary characters,
- "Make a list of non-reducible characteristics",
- "Work from both ends" (observation and intuition),

- "Just keep working on it, adding detail, until the character begins taking on a life of its own",
- when the character has been established, "the student should then try to look for the bits of cultural and social imagery that fit to give the characters a concrete, recognizable presence on the stage",
- "It is important to remember that each character in your play should have their own pattern of speech",
- "Imagine a real, living actor playing the part on a real stage before a real audience",
- "Building a character is like trying to remember your dreams . . . . You remember some shapes, some slashes of color, maybe some snatches of conversation. You try to make some sense out of it. Then you fill in the holes with things you already know",
- "Sometimes the characters can write the play through the writer",
- "I haven't a clue",
- "Instinct",
- "Put yourself in the character's place",
- "Do all of this [analysis] <u>after</u> a first draft",
- "Be as sympathetic as possible to each character and allow us to see why they have to be the way they have to be",
- "Don't limit them with sweeping assumptions, i.e., this character wouldn't do that - use what if - as a kick off",
- "One must create a living, breathing entity",

- to "write from stream of consciousness is difficult but useful, too".

B. Implications For the School Program

Responses to this question provide a rich resource of ideas on character development, all of which will reward the student or teacher who takes the time to study them. There is no point in repeating all of them here. However, the six most frequently mentioned considerations demand special attention from those within the school program. Students should, for example, be encouraged to prepare a detailed life history, at least for the main characters in a play. This should include such information as age, sex, occupation, idiosyncracies and passions along with such preparatory work as monologues and out-takes. Students should also be encouraged to model characters on real-life people, observing their models with an eye to realistic detail and multidimensional understanding.

Students should be encouraged to endow their characters with the potential for conflict and change in order to promote development of plot and revelation of character. Indeed, it should be recognized that plot and character are inextricably inter-related. In view of this relationship and the progressive nature of the writing process, students should be encouraged to remain open to possible changes in character in spite of any preparatory work already undertaken. An important factor in keeping the character true to his or her essential nature while remaining open to further development is the character's personal

motivation. Students should, therefore, be encouraged to clarify, at an early stage, what each character wants or needs.

Question Seven

(What is the value of rewriting part or all of a play?)

A. Analysis of Responses

Respondents were almost unanimous in confirming the importance of rewriting part or all of the play. The vast majority said it was essential. A significant minority considered it to be of significant value and a smaller group saw it as valuable, under the right conditions. There was only one dissenting voice. Accompanying comments specified various objectives for rewriting a play. Others made observations and recommendations concerning the process of revision. Numerous individual perspectives were also received.

A total of 86 citations spoke of rewriting as an essential component in the process of writing a play. Comments included, "writing is rewriting", and "rewriting is everything". A number of respondents said, "Plays are not written, they are rewritten." One wrote, "I have never read a first draft . . . which couldn't have been improved by revision, and I have read thousands in the past 30+ years of developing original scripts."

A group of 36 respondents regarded the rewriting process as being of significant value, if not actually essential. Typical of comments received were, "nearly always necessary" and "very valuable". One citation recommended, ". . . they should be encouraged to overwrite at first - get the thing out - then impose the discipline of structure, form, theatrical technique."

14 respondents said that rewriting could be valuable, under the right conditions. Comments included, "It might make it better", and "It is only of value if the writer sees the need to do so". One said, "It depends on the student's skill." Some struck a cautionary note, "There is a rhythm and energy that exists the first time through that begins to break down the more I rewrite."

One respondent saw rewriting as counterproductive. "I don't think plays can be re-written because re-writing implies the act of re-thinking something that's been quickly and spontaneously produced." By contrast, a number of other respondents mentioned Noel Coward's Private Lives, an unrevised success, as the exception that proves the rule.

A total of 81 citations mentioned specific objectives which the rewriting process could achieve. 20 spoke in terms of cutting, pruning or editing to remove redundancies, inconsistencies, ambiguities and excess verbiage. 19 said rewriting could clarify or focus the work while 18 said it could help the writer to more fully understand and develop the characters. 15 rewrote to revise the structure of the play, 13, to improve the dialogue, 9, to improve the plot, 9, to "improve it", 7, to add layers of depth, 6 to correct flaws, 5, to "sharpen", 5, to polish and 5, to revise scenes that "don't work". Another 5 recommended rewriting to improve pace and rhythm, 4, to tighten, 4, to imporove the staging, 4, to strengthen, 3, to clean, 3, to explore and exploit the emotional values, 3, to gain insights, 2, to improve the forward movement

or drive of the play, 2, to "refine", 2, to make beautiful and elegant, and 2 to hone skills and to learn. Other objectives mentioned were to add texture, to smooth transitions between scenes, to "fine tune", to remove the "inanities", to intensify the initial "vision", to simplify, to add balance, to redefine motivation, to "channel", to rework curtain lines and small units and to add tension.

A variety of comments accompanied and, in some cases, modified the general endorsement of rewriting. 20 respondents advised students to write at least three drafts of each play. Included in this figure were 8 who specified 3 drafts and another 8 who specified various numbers up to 10 drafts. Others specified between 2 and 4 drafts.

18 respondents said that the response of actors and directors to the script can be valuable. One mentioned a helpful story-editor. These citations referred to the processes of reading and/or workshopping a play and valued both the writer's response on hearing or seeing the play performed and the performers' comments. One wrote, "Good actors can help a playwright in motivating the dialogue . . . ."

12 citations advised the student avoid change for the sake of change. One said, "There is too much attempting to alter material to become something it shouldn't (like - 'I love your setting, but want something with political relevance or a mystery')". Some of these respondents argued that rewriting is only of value if the writer sees the need to do so (not just to please an actor or director). As one said, "If you do you will

never fully realize your potential as a playwright."

11 citations recommended putting a completed draft aside for a period of days or even weeks before rewriting. One said, "Over time, the writer becomes less personally engaged, more able to see what really works, as opposed to what they feel should work."

10 citations spoke about the negative impression a writer is apt to receive on re-assessing his or her own work. They warn that at least some of the material he/she originally considered "brilliant" will appear, on second glance, to be "drivel". They presented this common experience as a burden which the playwright must be prepared to bear.

9 respondents looked upon rewriting as a process of discovery. One said, "A good rewrite is like a good edit and will expose what's really valid and worthwhile about the play".

8 citations said that the first draft is a mere guideline (or skeleton) for use in the creation of later drafts.

Trying out a play in front of an audience is an important part of the rewriting process, according to 6 citations. One said, "You find out that parts you thought were brilliant are having no effect whatsoever." Another wrote, "9 times out of 10, the audience will tell you what needs to be rewritten." This experience was seen as particularly important to one writer who specialized in children's theatre.

3 said that there are no rules and it depends on the individual.

3 pointed out that many " classic works were extensively rewritten".

3 said that changes can also create new problems which then need to be solved.

3 explained that rewriting serves much the same purpose as rehearsal does for actors.

2 said that rewriting "helps you get closer to the play you want to write" (to what you mean).

2 said that "submitting a first draft to a theatre . . . is a waste of everybody's time."

2 said that rewriting teaches the writer that "his words aren't precious". One wrote, "The source is inexhaustible. Things can always be changed."

Numerous individual perspectives were recorded, throwing light on various aspects of the rewriting process. These included:

- "To throw things away and start again is not bad",

- rewriting involves "analysing every scene and rethinking it",
- "I'd really emphasize that rewriting isn't nearly as much fun as that first initial burst but that it's 90% of the job",
- to rewrite, "go through every scene from each character's point of view",
- "Young children can't be expected to do much rewriting. They can 'rewrite' a play they've written by ad-libbing",
- "Sometimes to slightly modify a script we have to rip it up and rework the whole through line",
- students should be encouraged to "work and rework a scene to explore its fullest potential",
- "The student should direct the play in his imagination - find the acting and directing problems - and solve them in each draft",
- it is important to rewrite until the writer is "satisfied nothing more can be done to improve it, but it could be disastrous to overwrite",
- "Attention must be paid to the script's original impetus and intention lest it be mislaid rather than refined from draft to draft",
- "There are plays that should probably remain as exercises because they cannot be reworked to work",
- "Learning to collaborate . . . . Playwrights can always learn from others",

- "Every character has his or her own plot or graph. Write one draft for each major character, thinking it through from that character's point of view",
- "So often in the school system we are marked with deadlines and grades. A paper is finished when it's handed in. I know that overburdoned teachers don't really want to read the same story twice, but a good editor is invaluable if only to ask questions that may have been unanswered in the first draft",
- "Remember, playwrights' works are subject to the interpretation of directors, writers, designers, etc. - Make sure what <u>you</u> want is clearly stated",
- "I prefer to place more emphasis on conceptualization - - the better the concept, the better the writing . . . . Better to spend more time re-thinking than re-writing",
- "I tried something and it seems to work for me - instead of rewriting . . . by just changing things you've already written - write it all from scratch - it came out better",
- three individual descriptions of rewriting were put forward. According to the first, the key is "honest re-examination" - demanding of oneself an unswerving submission to the theme, objectively testing one's technical skill, permitting oneself the "freedom" to "re-enter the life of the play in further depth". The second, spoke of "the careful examination of those words - picking each one up off the page, holding it to

the light, turning it over and over searching for fault, and when you're sure it's right you put it back on the page and leave it". The third definition required having "at least heard it read". One must ask oneself, "Does it have pace? Is it boring? Is it vague? Is it trite? Does the first act ending make you want to come back after intermission? Do we care about the characters and what happens to them? Is it too long? Is it focussed? Does enough happen? Do the characters grow or change? Is there a clear resolution?"

B. Implications for the School Program

Very clearly, rewriting must be seen, within the school program, as a natural, indeed an essential, facet of the writing process just as rehearsal is seen as an essential facet of the production process. This attitude is somewhat at odds with the usual and expected school procedures for handling written assignments. Students may assume from past experiences, that the completion of a first draft will fulfil the teacher's basic requirements and that any grade assigned will necessarily be a final one. In such circumstances, an assignment which is returned to the student for rewriting may be regarded as a failure and cause for despair. But a school program which has omitted the element of rewriting has, in view of the above responses, omitted the heart of the writing process. Consequently, the teacher must be at pains to establish a

classroom atmosphere within which rewriting can be regarded in a positive light. The giving and receiving of criticism and advice must also be handled in a constructive way if students are to be able to continue an extended project after their work-in-progress has been subjected to the comments of teachers, peers or outside experts (such as visiting playwrights).

Question Eight

(Is there a specific order of events which you can recommend the student follow over the course of writing a play?)

A. Analysis of Responses

A large majority of respondents were willing to put forward a specific order of events or to make related comments with a direct bearing on the development of such an order. A significant minority were not. An analysis of recommended procedures brought to light a number of shared steps which fell, generally, into two categories - those which served as starting points and those which marked intermediary stages in the development of a play. Starting points included the assumption of a suitable premise, a gestation period, the preparation of a scenario, character development and self-motivation. Intermediary steps included the writing of a first draft, rewriting, the preparation of a scenario, workshopping the script, character development, and plot development. Apart from these two general categories, a number of related comments and suggestions were offered, along with many individual perspectives.

Out of 142 respondents who answered this question, 105 put forward a specific order of events for the student to follow over the course of writing a play, or made comments which had a direct bearing on the development of such an order, as opposed to 37 who responded "no" or "not really".

Starting points:

23 respondents emphasized the importance of the assumption of a suitable premise at the inception of the writing process. Many others, who recommended other starting points, seemed to assume the existence of such a premise. This group of 23 included answers which spoke of "inspiration", "the happy idea", "a strong concept", the "general idea", and "an idea that contains potential conflict". Some of the citations suggested that the writer put the premise into one or two "active" sentences, so that the "backbone" of the play would be clear.

10 recommended beginning with a gestation period. As one said, "Take time to let the characters and story perk in your brain." Another said to "dream". 2 specified that this process would take place over a period of from 9 to 12 months.

10 advised the student to prepare a scenario, called variously a "storyline", an "outline" or a "breakdown". It will be noted later that another group of 23 citations referred to the preparation of a scenario as an intermediary step and that another group of 13 citations advised making a detailed scene by scene treatment. Therefore, a total of 46 citations recommended making some kind of a written plan, usually at an early stage in the writing process and generally after a clear premise has been determined.

9 respondents recommended that the student begin with the characters, or, in some cases, with the characters and the situation, together. One wrote, "Know the characters first."

8 citations spoke of the writer's self-motivation as a starting point. One referred to "a feeling of rising creative compulsion"; another said to write on a theme which is "important to you". "Decide what you want to write about more than anything else", wrote another, "and know why you want to write it". These comments tended to contrast well-motivated writing with "a make work project".

A group of 8 recommended simply writing - "getting down to it" as soon, or as regularly, as possible. One wrote, "Sit down every day for a certain amount of time, whether you feel inspired or not . . . ."

6 citations advised the student to begin with a consideration of the theme. Comments included, "Know your theme", "choose your theme", and decide "what the play is about". One asked, "What is it you want to say?"

3 recommended the student begin with free-flow writing. These citations suggested letting "the main intuitive material come out freely", before trying to shape it analytically.

2 advised beginning with research, on the one hand to search for ideas and on the other hand to learn more about a chosen topic.

2 respondents recommended that the student "write the climax first".

A number of individual perspectives were recorded which spoke directly about the issue of how to begin writing a play.

These included:

- "Start near a crisis in a person's life. Discover what the person says and does with the other people around him. See where that person's desires take you, what obstacles get in the way",
- plan the first, second and third act "curtains" to insure that the structure is complete,
- ask, "Why a play?",
- tackle a "worthy subject" and learn how to "own it, feel it, see it",
- use the "building block" technique. "Take one element at a time (in any order) and build from there",
- "For me often a title - or theme - sets off the creative/thinking/research process",
- "The student should decide ahead of time what events must be seen by the audience and what events are less important and can happen off stage",
- "Know how the story ends and where it begins",
- "Have something to say",
- "As a preliminary exercise, a student might read and analyse the structure of short plays or scenes, writing fuller character analyses than have been given by the playwright."

Intermediary Steps:

Virtually all of the following suggestions assumed that the final step in the process was actually "writing the play" or "rewriting to completion". There was insufficient correlation

among responses to determine an agreed-upon order for these intermediary steps. They are certainly not mutually exclusive and some overlap with comments made in the preceeding section on starting points.

28 citations spoke of a first draft as an intermediary step. They recommended that the writer, having established certain perameters in terms of character and action, make a concerted effort to "get it all out at once" before beginning to analyse and rework the material.

A slightly larger number (32) saw rewriting, or a second draft, as an important part of the process. These comments included the idea of "polishing" the work.

23 citations recommended writing a short treatment, scenario, outline or synopsis. Included were comments about "making a few notes" and "deciding structure". This appears to be a different emphasis than that suggested by another group of respondents who spoke about writing a detailed scene by scene analysis which, in some instances, was to be done later in the process.

17 respondents considered "workshopping" the script to be an important step. This number included citations which recommended "reading" the play - that is, either the dramatist reading the work to others, or others (friends, classmates, actors) reading it for the dramatist. Generally, however, workshopping was considered to be somewhat more extensive than a simple reading.

16 citations recommended developing a wide variety of suggestions on the subject of character development. 5 advised

writing character studies or a pre-history. 4 recommended developing characters and the setting either together or in sequence. 3 advised developing characters at an early stage. 2 suggested writing a "few trial lines" or a "sample dialogue" to discover the character's voice. One said to "write the characters alone and with each other to find out more about them". One advised choosing "some characters who are driven". And one said to "choose character names".

15 respondents specified plot development as an important step. Included were suggestions that the student "start using the characters to tell a story" and showing "how that person pursues his desire". A number of suggestions were received concerning how the structure could or should be organized. One example recommended that the writer "set scenes, use a catalyst (exciting incident) and determine the major turning points, the climax and the resolution". Others suggested shaping one's "intuitive materials" and thinking of "a solid and graceful structure to put your characters into, that will best allow you to execute your theme". One posed the questions, "What is the end? What is the beginning? How do I get from the beginning to the end?" Another respondent recommended a three-act structure, "Divide your story into three acts. Not literally, emotionally. Act one is your set up. Who is the main character? What does he want? Who or what's stopping him? What's at stake? [In] Act two are obstacles the main character must overcome to achieve [his] goal. Act three is the resolution. Does the character achieve [his] goal or not? If not, why not?"

9 respondents recommended letting the first draft sit awhile before starting to rewrite it. Most advised following this procedure on principle, as a regular step. One recommended it as an occasional practice, ". . . if you're exhausted, let it alone".

8 citations advised the student to let the plot develop from a deep knowledge of the characters. One said, "Figure out what events are going to explain fully who the characters are." Another asked, "What is the major objective or principal desire of the chief character which will force him/her to generate the action of the play?" Another said, "As one gets to know the characters better, their story unfolds."

7 respondents considered a critique to be an important step. They recommended that the student have a director, a dramaturg, a friend or a teacher read and respond to the work-in-progress.

6 advised the student write scenes in the order they will appear in the play. This procedure also seems to have been assumed by most of those mentioned above, who recommended making a concerted effort to complete the first draft in a relatively non-analytical, free-flowing mode.

5 respondents considered research to be an important step.

5 described a step involving "filling in the gaps". This process was seen to be necessary after key sections had been written. One wrote, "Sometimes a fragment will grow both ways."

4 recommended a stage of free form writing to achieve flow.

In a related set of comments, 4 respondents advised the student to keep writing when the "juices are flowing" in order to maintain flow.

3 advised the student to search for characters and a plot which will give dimension to the theme or idea.

3 spoke of putting the character into an environment as a step in the development of character and plot.

2 recommended the student, "Have an idea of how you would like to bring the characters together and what that will lead to."

2 recommended that the student "write the scenes you feel an interest in", rather than working through the play from beginning to end.

2 recommended a period of gestation as an intermediary step.

2 advised the student to "choose your genre". One asked, "Is it to be primarily comic in focus, dramatic, musical, clownlike?"

Many individual perspectives were recorded which bore directly on the question of intermediary steps. Included were:

- decide on "a set that puts pressure" on the characters,
- one step is "the reading aloud",
- ask many questions,
- "Give yourself certain checkpoints where you evaluate the work in progress in plot, interest, characters and dialogue",
- develop a theme with dramatic potential,
- share your outline with others, at various stages,

- write and test individual scenes before writing "the whole thing",
- "Try crises and resolutions on all of the characters, then, if necessary, change the character or the plot",
- read all notes made in the gestation period,
- give yourself a deadline and stick to it,
- draft the "end scenes of acts",
- "What do you want to say? Through whom do you say it? What style do you find most effective theatrically?",
- keep starting over,
- know how the play starts and how it ends,
- as the speeches appear, decide clearly on progressive actions,
- find the "hook" or the central element or image in your imagined work,
- a "jig-saw-puzzle method may work well". Attack from all directions before deciding on an order,
- try writing a series of notes "while ruminating on . . . the outline",
- "Find a title", to stir an insight into what the play would look and sound like,
- develop the set design before the characters,
- act out the play as you go along to see that it "works",
- give attention to "scene breaks, curtain situations, dialogue, stage directions",
- choose a situation or series of situations which will allow you to attack your subject from a number of angles,

- plan the action up to the point of the major climax and, in the first draft, let your momentum carry you on beyond what has been planned,
- use "the collection: notes tossed into a folder on characters, character traits, sketches of relationship, twists of plot, etc.",
- know the basic conflict early, "the central, climactic conflict",
- define what you have to say in terms of "character, conflict, resolution",
- an idea search might be "spurred on" by thinking of "a family history, incident, or using the style of favourite movies or T.V. shows",
- "Be at peace with yourself, so that memories do not interfere too greatly while you are writing",
- "How will you say it? Explore it, edit and clarify",
- after preparing an outline, "Write dialogue for one scene. Take it to the producer or artistic director of a theatre . . . and if necessary to another and another until you find someone who wants to produce it or provide you with the means to workshop it".

Related Comments and Suggestions:

A number of comments and suggestions were received which did not fit easily into the two previous categories. For example, 4 citations referred to the order of events within the play, rather than the order of events to be followed by the writer. These were generally concerned with satisfying the need for a

beginning, middle and end. One recommended this order, "Introduction of characters, setting, time and place; exposure (of the play's conflict); rising action (escalating events, obstacles); denoument (final resolution)".

3 recommended that the student be open to criticism and suggestions.

3 advised the student to "be honest; try to tell the truth, clearly, about something".

3 said that the order of events varies with the individual and 3 said it varies with each project.

2 advised students to see lots of plays.

2 said, "Just keep at it" and "The only universal is perserverence".

2 said not to be discouraged if the second reading "of what looked wonderful yesterday, looks terrible today . . . . Wait a bit before dumping it - it might be better than you think."

2 advised, "Be prepared to recognize faults in your work" and "Remember - your every word is not a pearl . . . ."

A large number of individual perspectives were also recorded which were of a general nature. These included:

- write lots of plays (not just one),
- read plays,
- develop a working order "one-to-one" with each student,
- "The signposts which you plan may change when you reach them",
- "Experiment",

- "Never follow a system that inhibits your imagination or flexibility",
- give "Absolute attention to timing, particularly in comedy",
- stay open to the characters but remain loyal to their central integrity,
- "Our subconscious is amazing - probably has all sorts of stuff mapped out that we have to discover",
- try to work in "a collective",
- try to perform a one-act monologue,
- "It takes about two to three years, minimally, to complete a play",
- keep motivated by remembering "that first moment of inspiration",
- the key question to contemplate is always "why?",
- "Move forward at all times; don't stop writing during any given writing session until the play or the sketchings-at-hand has moved from one point to the next. Also it helps to have some idea of where you're going to begin the next writing session",
- "Write on a regular, disciplined routine . . . . Ideas come from work, not thinking",
- "A real, living play - really will write the student",
- keep the number of characters and settings to a minimum - "a two-hander, one-set, one-act is the best kind of project for new writers because it's easier to focus the action and character development",

- "Write according to priorities of interest. It's very chaotic and you have to accept that. Don't swim for safety any more than you have to. Be comfortable not knowing. Be willing to sit it out until you do know",
- "You have to have dramatic metaphores to show what's happening",
- "Don't show the script before it's ready. Don't read scripts to friends. Don't workshop before the third draft. Don't ever listen to friends - one way or the other",
- "Give each character a full life, the words poetry, the objects meaning, the visuals meaning. Give yourself lots of time to revise",
- always ask, "If I were in the audience and didn't know anything before coming in, would I understand this? Be interested in it? Enjoy it?",
- "Study and fool around with certain mechanisms that make plays work - conflict, suspense, pacing, cutting - improvisation techniques",
- "For me drama is the juxtaposition of the expected against the unexpected within the chain of motivation. That means you must proceed from one interesting incident or image to the next for maximum dramatic effect. Dialogue must always move the action. I feel that an unpredictable ending which is arrived at causally (motivated) is an asset",

- "As a rule, I know where I'm going with a piece of work - - - aware too of the modification and alterations which might take place",
- "I never allow negative criticism in group discussion. If there is to be negative criticism, I do it either face to face or in notes",
- "I feel that things should have a definite beginning and a definite end - open with something that grabs - the harder and the sooner the better, and close with something people remember and maybe think about",
- "Write about what you know",
- "Learn the classical plotting structure before venturing too far off . . . . If your subconscious forces you to write experimentally try to learn the basics . . . ."

B. Implications for the School Program

Perhaps the most significant implication for the school program to arise from this question is the fact that most respondents were prepared to countenance the idea that students could benefit from the recommendation of a specific order of events within the writing process. The divergence of their responses strikes a cautionary note, however, to those who would try to fix a single, universally applicable set of procedures. Individual variations must be acknowledged and even encouraged. Nevertheless, the convergence of many responses in a number of key steps does make it possible to assemble a composite

progression which may prove useful to teachers and students, if looked upon as an open, non-prescriptive guideline.

The composite progression would see the student writer begin with a gestation period in which possible characters and plot ideas along with motivational and thematic considerations would be brought forward and allowed to interact freely. At some point, the writer would settle upon a suitable premise - a particularly compelling core idea with strong dramatic potential. Then the writer would prepare a scenario along with a personal history for each of the principal characters (perhaps for every character). When the structure has been outlined and the characters clearly visualized, then the student would be ready to write a first draft of the play in a concerted effort to "get it all out at once", in a relatively non-analytical process. The scenario and character descriptions would serve as flexible guidelines in this. Then the student would set the draft aside for a period of time before beginning to revise it. After one or more drafts have been completed the student may be ready to consider the reactions of other people. This could be effected through a critique by the teacher or other knowledgeable and sympathetic individual. After two or three drafts, the student may be ready to see and hear the effect of the play in an informal performance which might be as simple as a private reading or as complex as a workshop production. Following this performance and taking into account any related comments from actors, director and audience members, the student would make further revisions to the play in preparation for a more formal production. If such a

production were realized, the student would proceed with at least one more set of revisions.

This composite progression has been deduced from remarks made by large numbers of respondents and may benefit many student writers who feel the need for a clearly marked set of procedures. Probably, students should be encouraged to follow the general pattern of this progression at least once in order to determine its usefulness in their own situation. However, each student will have to develop a personal approach to its use and some student writers may actually find it counter-productive. Clearly, there is no justification for rigidly applying this or any other set of procedures to all students in the school program. A variety of alternative approaches and supplementary ideas are included in responses to this question and should be taken into account by the playwrighting teacher.

Question Nine

(Is there a particular set of principles which you would recommend to a teacher who is about to teach a course (or a unit) on the processes of the playwright's art?)

A. Analysis of Responses

A large number of principles were put forward for the teacher's guidance together with many related comments. Foremost among these were a description of the ideal teacher as an encouraging and process-centered facilitator and a recommendation that the student be exposed to the work of many playwrights. Respondents recommended, also, that the student be given an opportunity to see his or her work brought to life in some kind of performance, and that the student be encouraged to become knowledgeable about and experienced in the practicalities of theatre and play production.

The greatest number of responses (44) recommended that the student be exposed to the work of many playwrights. Of these, 27 specified that the student should read many plays in various styles. These citations emphasized the need to analyze the plays read as well as the importance of variety in the dramatic literature. Some saw this kind of reading to be an important element in the preparation of the teacher, too. Another group of 17 recommended that the student should see a variety of plays in production.

A total of 42 respondents were in considerable agreement that the teacher of a course (or a unit) on the processes of the playwright's art should adopt an encouraging and facilitating role. He or she should avoid being too rigidly doctrinaire in laying down rules or in assessing students' work, "lest the result be the stifling of creativity and experimentation". Students should be able to experiment without fear of harsh judgment. The teacher should create a happy and liberating atmosphere in the classroom and should be careful "not to make the students write their plays as the teacher would have written them". The student should be allowed a large element of choice including, for example, the freedom to write dialogue containing profanities. One said to, "Encourage the process rather than emphasing the results."

The course should be based on the student's own writing, according to 27 citations. One wrote, "Writing is doing, not talking or theorizing. Writing exercises (like finger scales on piano) can provide challenges which can sharpen a playwright's tools." Students should be encouraged to write a lot (even continuously), to experiment with style and form and to rewrite their work. In addition to these specific citations, it was evident that many other respondents made the assumption that the course would center on the student's writing and went ahead to make some of the following comments on that understanding. In fact, this assumption was challenged (in responses to this question) by only one respondent who wrote, "I don't believe in teaching playwriting."

20 respondents recommended that students be assisted and encouraged to see and/or hear their work in a performance of some kind, whether it be an informal reading by classmates or a more formal production by professional, semi-professional, amateur or "ad hoc" groups. Three of these citations referred specifically to the process of "workshopping" the students' work.

18 citations said the students should be encouraged to make their work stageworthy using visual, auditory, physical, emotional, theatrical, and spatial elements. This group included 6 respondents who emphasized the significant differences which they found between theatre work and writing for television or film. Another 6 specified that the unique demands of writing for the stage were centered around the importance of dialogue in playwriting.

16 respondents said that the student should be encouraged to become knowledgeable about and experienced in the practicalities of theatre and play production. Acting and directing received special attention in some of these responses but, generally, the intent was that students should have a chance to work in the theatre in a variety of jobs.

10 citations advised that bone fide playwrights should be involved in teaching the proposed course or unit. Of these, 6 specified that only practicing playwrights should be allowed to teach the course, while 4 recommended that the teacher should talk to playwrights and bring them into the classroom, as guests. One wrote, "Get students to read interviews with working playwrights. Try to have students meet and talk to working

playwrights." Some cautioned the teacher/playwright to avoid imposing his or her own style on the students. To the teacher who is not (yet) a playwright, one suggested, "Try writing a play analyse them carefully and form your own set of principles . . . ."

9 respondents said that students should be advised to channel their passions (and interests) into their work, to "write what's important to them". These citations tended to emphasize the need for personal expression and for feeling strongly about the subject, as opposed to the wish, felt by some, to please others or to imitate "great" playwrights.

9 said that the evaluation of students' work and the establishment of goals and criteria should recognize that, ultimately, the vital test of a play is whether it can hold an audience - "entertain it, in the broad sense".

9 recommended that students be encouraged to <u>discuss</u> a broad range of scripts, including the students' own work. The teacher was seen as a moderator in these discussions which one citation said should take place in "an energized context".

9 said that students should participate in dramatic improvisations - to generate and develop ideas within a theatrical context. One respondent emphasized the need to "listen to one another" in these improvisations. One recommended "games involving scripting".

7 pointed out that playwriting is a craft involving a combination of practical and artistic demands. These citations generally stressed a need for discipline and for knowing the rules before undertaking to break them.

6 said that students should be taught how to structure their work. These citations referred to the importance of developing "logical" plots (in keeping, for example, with Grebanier) and suggested that students write scenarios like those of great "classical" plays.

6 said that students should be encouraged to create and develop "solid", "moving", "interesting", and "authentic" characters, rather than stereotypes.

6 advised that students should try participating in "collective collaborations". One respondent suggested, for example, that students, in groups, record their "thematic improvisations", transcribe the tape and then shape the material into scripted scenes. Another said to "do lots of team creative work to give a feeling of the collaborative necessity. Joint projects so the enthusiastic can get the less interested involved".

6 said that teachers should recognize individual differences in writers and encourage them to find their own methods of working, rather than following a strict set of rules. One said, "Allow a student to approach a play from their first initial creative impulse . . . ."

5 recommended that students should include a strong element of conflict in their work. Comments included the assertion that "conflict is everything" and a suggestion that conflict can be achieved through contrast.

5 said that practice pieces should be short, especially at the beginning.

5 said that students should be assisted to understand the basic idea of dramatic action. One wrote, "Without it nothing can be accomplished." These citations referred to the need to include exciting events, both physical action and imagery, and to avoid making the work "too talky".

5 advised the teacher to emphasize the "communal" and "co-operative" nature of theatre art in which all contributions are dependent on and responsible to all others. Group process was considered important.

4 reiterated that students should be encouraged to write about "what they know". Included, was the suggestion that they should strive to "get inside all the characters".

4 said that students should be advised not to preach.

4 said that students should be encouraged to observe life - specifically elements such as "voices", "rhythms", and "personalities". They stressed a need to know people and understand "their dynamics of behavior".

4 said students should be encouraged to strive for honesty in their work - "honesty, integrity and respect for what you're doing". This honesty was contrasted with a gratuitous manipulation of the audience.

3 said that simplicity is the secret of art and that students should strive for it.

3 recommended that the teacher use a variety of classroom exercises concentrating on different aspects of writing and various approaches that can be taken.

3 said that students must be ready to accept, examine and even incorporate other people's observations and criticism of their work.

3 remarked that students should know what they want to say, to achieve clarity.

3 recommended that teachers introduce Canadian plays as examples - not only in the Dramatic Arts classroom but also in the English classroom.

2 said that teachers should share an enthusiasm for, or a love of, the theatre.

2 warned students to watch for pretentiousness or self-indulgence.

2 advised teachers to impress on their students that play-writing is a responsibility not to be taken lightly.

2 said students should strive for economy by avoiding repetitions.

2 said students should be encouraged to enjoy the writing process and make it a "labour of love".

2 said that the objective of the course should be to help students appreciate how a play is written, but not necessarily to make them into playwrights.

Alternatively, 2 said that the objective should be to use the process as a vehicle for self-examination, self-expression, and observation of the human condition (again, in contrast to the production of more playwrights). One wrote, "Playwriting is terrifically beneficial to understanding human relationships . . .

developing organizational skills . . . exploring psychological, social, political issues."

2 said that the courses should not be compulsory. Students should, even, come to the course with prerequisites - "a personal motivation to write plays and even some previous work which can be shown".

2 advised students to read their work aloud, often (but, not necessarily in public).

2 said students should analyse and write an outline of a play they like and think works well. One suggested that the anlysis include such elements as "selective nature of time, climaxes, twists, revelations, character through-lines, inevitability, surprises, catharsis, etc.".

2 said that the student should be encouraged to give the imagination or the unconscious preeminence over the rational.

2 recommended that students should master the fundamentals of story-telling techniques. These were seen to be based in structure - a series of moments of suspense that carry the action forward.

2 recommended that, through a study of a variety of styles and authors, students should learn that there is no "right answer" on how to handle a specific subject.

2 advised the teacher to introduce "daring", modern playwrights (Miller, O'Neil, Simon) as models, instead of "classics" (Bacon, Shakespeare).

2 said teachers should use examples and encourage the exploration of themes which are relevant to the students. "Youth issues" was cited as an example.

2 reported having no principles which they would recommend.

Suggested Exercises:

Many respondents suggested specific exercises for inclusion in a course or unit on the playwrights' art. These are grouped together, below, for convenience of reference. Except where noted parenthetically, (2) or (3), each exercise represents the contribution of a single respondent.

- "Write practise scenes in which you present a conflict and reach a resolution with known characters (not T.V. clones)."
- "Write scenes" (2), "scenarios" (2), short topics.
- "Write "in the style of" various known writers, in "the apprentice system". For example, write extra scenes for proven plays (2).
- "Write scenes, or fragments of scenes, based on given stimuli - for example, "a bit of text", "a character", a "situation", or "a first line developed into 6" (2).
- "Write a scene or short play in a limited time, eg. 30 minutes".
- "Write a scene emphasizing 'subtlety' - creating an explosive atmosphere without any literal signposts".
- "Try your hand at many different types of writing" -

e.g., a monologue, possibly as stream of consciousness, (3), a "comic" scene, a scene with no dialogue, a story adaptation.

- "Try to outline a well-known story, e.g. a fairy tale, from the point of view of various characters, eg. Little Red Riding Hood as the wolf's story. Then outline it in various styles, eg., as a horror film, as a musical comedy, etc." The objective is to "lay bare the form and process".
- "Try adapting creative drama exercises to poetry".
- Write a piece of dialogue. (3)
- Try writing a revue; so each student can contribute one segment and see it performed alongside others.
- Require students to write "immediately" (2) - "a character sketch", "a scene for absolute beginners, at least a short play for those who have tried the form before".
- "Practise scenes should be written - sometimes to show character and sometimes to show a beginning, middle, and end (a definite change the character has undergone)."
- "If they like the idea, students can write mime scenes, gibberish scenes."
- Students may want to try exercises like these: "I make large coloured graphs of the throughlines. I do tai chi and harmonic singing to warm up".
- Experience in public speaking can help one understand the actor/audience relationship.

- "Study a specific play and try to get inside the playwright's mind", comparing, if possible, the play with the writer's autobiography.
- "Try writing fight scenes."
- The teacher should ask students about the most dramatic moment in their life or memory. "This always gets AMAZING results."
- Every speech is interaction. Ask "who, when, why, what, how, where. Be a reporter."
- While engaging in teacher-assigned exercises, the student should be working on one of his or her own plays. The teacher should "meet privately" (1 to 1) "to consult on this separate work".

Recommended books:

In the course of answering this question, respondents cited a number of books which they had found useful. For ease of reference, these are grouped together, below. Unless noted paranthetically (2), each book represents the contribution of a single respondent.

- Egri, Lajas. The Art of Dramatic Writing. (2)
- Grebanier, Bernard. Playwriting - How To Write For the Theatre. (2) Of special interest were the chapters on the Proposition and the Climax.
- Aristotle. Poetics.
- Gardiner, John. The Art of Fiction.
- Engel, Lehman. Words and Music.
- Other author: Lawson, John Howard.

Individual Perspectives:

Apart from the exercises and book references cited above, a large number of individual perspectives were recorded in response to this question.

- "To write takes a lot of time (and) is like alchemy - something from nothing. One cannot expect young adults without a lot of life experience to write very well",
- "I have my own particular vision of what theatre can and should be but rarely is - a place of real magic, transformation, excitement. . . ",
- remind students that "honest confidence is their greatest asset - - next to talent". Some very successful plays were originally rejected by many theatres,
- "Stress an awareness of form - but never form for form's sake",
- Teachers should "be honest" in evaluating students' work,
- "It could be pointed out that few masterpieces are 'dashed off'",
- "Never dream of Broadway: write for and about your own people",
- "If you want to write poetry too, don't write plays; poetic dialogue in particular is <u>poison</u>",
- "Never allow the identity of the author to remain anonymous when work is read aloud",
- the teacher should "find something positive, require revision, remain objective and keep your sense of humour",

- teach how to write a play free from sex, violence and profanity. "If you can write a play like this, then you can write any play",
- "The student must understand that dialogue is not like literal speech and a play is not like literal reality: 1) because a play is art and art is something with the feel of life, but structured to comment on it, 2) because drama lends itself to leaps of time and space and meaning by means of stage imagery",
- the students should "decide whether they, in fact, like plays - - or the theatre - - and decide whether the theatre should be changed or . . . remain the way it is",
- one response cited a structural approach called the "5 C's representing "cause (premise), character, conflict, climax and conclusion", possibly derived from L. Egri's book,
- "I don't think you have to be a writer to teach writing but you have to understand it. Teaching is an art by itself",
- "The teacher must have a knowledge of the medium - not just organizational skills",
- "The students must fully understand and appreciate the form and the process from an academic viewpoint",
- "Use a production and a playwright",
- "Theatre consists, at bottom, of living persons sharing a time and space . . . . ",

- "Discourage television",
- "The playwright must have an intense desire to communicate with [the] audience and remove all barriers to this communication",
- "You're dealing with the basic psychology of human creation, how a person overcomes the guard at the door of the conscious mind . . . . [Learn] to be receptive to unfamiliar juxtapositions and events, [stay] with the process rather than the imagined outcome",
- "What can be taught is more in the realm of self awareness and self-confidence",
- "As a discipline, writing plays is such a bizarre occupation I can't even IMAGINE anyone who would think he could teach it",
- emphasize "humanness",
- include a critical study of T.V. productions and films,
- "Don't try to be original",
- "Emphasize the basic principles of drama - conflict, plot, exposition, character development, protagonist v.s. antagonist, action, climax resolution, dialogue",
- "You will need a theme",
- emphasize the quality of time spent writing as opposed to quantity,
- "Make sure students understand that writing is rewriting; that the author always feels like an Idiot; that nothing you write and throw out is wasted; that your first duty is not to bore yourself; that the secret of

boring other people is to tell them everything; that you show, don't tell",

- "Drama is usually cast in terms of basic human concerns or dilemmas (lust, hate, greed, desire, etc.)",
- students should be encouraged to listen to recordings of plays,
- "Dramatic literature courses (critical analysis) might help",
- the student should explore "assuming he/she knows nearly nothing",
- the teacher should "1) have a clear personal aesthetic and be able to articulate same, 2) be able to do hard-nose analysis of play structure (for any play), 3) have a clear idea of the nature of theatre and be able to articulate same",
- "It doesn't matter how many people are interested in writing plays . . . only a very few will actually have the talent to actually create anything that is original"; the teacher, therefore, must be able to recognize genuine originality,
- a finished work consists of "many small dramatic units (each with a beginning, middle, end) in combination, played against one another, interlocked, held, etc.",
- the teacher should make time to work individually (one to one) with each student,
- don't be an "artistic snob". "There is room in the theatre for entertainment",

- at an early stage, "set scenes/characters should probably be assigned",
- "Remember that plays are about people who are trying to do something important and who want something desperately. Talk is only important if it furthers action, ideas and themes out of relationships",
- "Avoid narration",
- "Require every workshop member to write comments on their fellow writer's script, a signed critique passed back to the author",
- "Make it fun."

B. Implications for the School Program

Many of these responses supported and enlarged upon implications deduced from earlier questions. The importance of exposing students to the work of many playwrights in various styles was emphasized once again, as was the value of a background in the practicalities of play production. Also reiterated were the need to base the course on the students' own writing and the need for students to see and/or hear their work in a performance of some kind. The school program must be designed to facilitate this performance experience, perhaps through a regular system of "workshopping" students' scripts. Associated with this interest in performance was the emphasis many placed on encouraging students to make their work stageworthy. This emphasis should find its way into the school program through instruction, practical experiences and evaluation criteria.

Significant new implications arose with regard to the nature and responsibilities of the teacher of a playwrighting course or component. A very clear picture of the ideal teacher emerged which should be carefully considered in the preparation and/or selection of teachers. The teacher should, by preference, be a practising playwright. If this is not possible (or perhaps even if it is possible) practising playwrights should be involved in the course as advisors to the teacher and as guest instructors. The teacher's prime responsibility is to promote the student's individual creativity. This should be done through the adoption of an encouraging and facilitating role, and an avoidance of doctrinaire positions and harsh judgments. The key to facilitating student creativity and learning is the establishment of a happy and liberating classroom atmosphere in which process is given priority over results and in which students are permitted to make many choices for themselves.

Many other valuable recommendations were made by smaller groups of respondents and by individuals, all of which should be drawn to the attention of playwriting teachers. Among these are a number of suggested exercises which can be used to promote a variety of learning objectives. The chief implication of these and other exercises mentioned throughout this report, is the idea that the playwriting course or unit need not be restricted to the development of entire plays. The process of writing a play can be broken down into a number of component parts and exercises can be provided to enhance the students' understanding of each step in the process. Indeed, the repeated emphasis on engaging

students in writing as much as possible would suggest that the teacher's responsibility for providing instruction might better be fulfilled through the assignment and evaluation of practical exercises rather than through conventional lecturing.

In addition, teachers and students would be advised to examine the books recommended by respondents.

Question Ten

(How should the teaching of the art of playwriting be related to a general education in the field of drama/theatre?)

A. Analysis of Responses

A large majority were agreed that the playwright's art should, indeed, be included in such a program because, on the one hand, the general theatre student would benefit from an understanding of the playwright's art and, on the other hand, the specialized playwriting student would benefit from a general understanding of theatre production. A significant number recommended that the student become familiar with many plays through reading scripts and seeing plays in production. Many other related comments and suggestions were also put forward.

A total of 88 citations recommended that playwriting be included in, or closely associated with, a general education in the field of drama/theatre. Of these, 47 gave the reason that the general theatre student would benefit from an understanding of the playwright's art. One said, "What better way to understand the full potential of drama/theatre than by trying one's hand at playwriting." Another pointed out, "Many actors, directors, producers and designers know almost nothing about playwriting." Another said playwriting should be related to a general program, "the same way physics should be related to a general education in math . . . . The notion of the artist as some isolated flower bursting into bloom full grown, like Athena from the head of Zeus, is romantic delusion."

41 respondents said that the specialized playwriting student would benefit from a general understanding of theatre production. Of these, 23 recommended gaining experience in acting; 11 cited directing; 6, lighting; 5, design; 3, technical work and 3, stage management. Other areas mentioned were props, audience, front of house, stage hand, music and stage work. One commented, "The more articulated all your skills are as a theatre person the richer your work can be." Another wrote, "One cannot create in a vacuum." Another said, "Perform first, write later."

26 citations recommended that the student become familiar with many plays through reading scripts (19) and watching performances (7). Included in these comments were the concepts that students should analyse, compare and discuss the plays read or seen, and that a high proportion of Canadian plays should be studied, as well as classics. Principles gleaned from effective scripts could, by implication, be applied to the student's own work. One citation suggested "reading plays before seeing them performed and vice versa". Another said that seeing productions will help students to gain "an understanding of the relationship between playwriting and the community".

9 respondents said that playwriting students should study the history of the theatre. One recommended they learn about, "not just western, not just 'civilized' [theatre] - including ritual, pageant, clown, commedia, mime - and learn about the great theatre produced through the ages without playwrights." A broad knowledge of contemporary theatre was also seen to be an asset.

7 citations considered "appreciation", of the great playwrights, of the craft of playwriting and of drama in general, to be an important goal or learning outcome.

6 recommended getting bone fide playwrights to speak to students as often as possible, particularly Canadian playwrights.

6 recommended including a performance element in the playwriting course. One wrote, "Right from the start you need to hear things out loud, imagine action, see how people respond to things . . . . Don't keep a group of playwrights cloistered away. Have them start with something 10 minutes long but let them have a chance to see something of theirs finished and on stage ASAP."

6 recommended using improvisation as a technique. One said, "Students should improvise scenes, play theatre games, etc." Another wrote that playwriting, "can be more integrated with acting classes i.e., motivating characters, building conflict situations - developing scripts through and based on improvisation - and study of structures used to realize intent."

5 mentioned that a playwriting component could have benefits for students in the area of personal development. For example, self expression and self discovery through playwriting were seen as important experiences for all students. One wrote that all drama, "helps to make us better communicators - it teaches us to feel and maybe to understand life better - to speak better, to listen better and to think better."

5 pointed out that playwriting, like all art, is related to life experience. Consequently, for example, "a writer has to be

open to stimuli of various kinds" and students "learn about life as a bonus".

3 said that there is "a big difference in teaching people to appreciate the art of playwriting and teaching people to be playwrights".

3 stressed that "playwriting is also a lot of fun and a great escape." One said, "If it's not fun, don't teach any of it."

2 said that students should not have to worry about grades and competition. "Never grade it. Never impose value."

2 recommended a focus on the spoken word rather than on big stage effects.

2 asked whether students in "general education" were going to be enthusiastically committed to "write, truly write".

2 recommended playwriting be offered (possibly as an elective) later on in the drama program. One possible format for the unit was "theory and projects plus a play as a final project - to be assessed for a mark".

2 said that the main thing is not to study playwriting, or "worry over it, but to do it".

2 expressed doubt about including playwriting in a general drama/theatre education. One said, "Dramatic structure originates in the head, not on the stage." Consequently, the writer had little need to know "anything about theatre" or "drama history".

A wide variety of individual perspectives were also offered in answer to this question, including:

- "You can't discount the 'magic' of theatre to stimulate an interest in writing for it",
- "The place to learn about the theatre is in the theatre",
- "One learns by doing",
- "Teaching playwriting should be done not as 'make work' but because it is integral to our cultural growth",
- "Young playwrights should not have their plays worked on by young actors. It's the blind teaching the blind",
- "As little as possible",
- " . . . playwrights are WRITERS FIRST AND FOREMOST and should not be ghettoized in Theatre Departments",
- a writer should know "the rules of playwriting" although he or she may choose to ignore them eventually,
- "At best it's an exercise in philosophy" but "Teaching theatre is dangerous. Look what it did for Shakepeare",
- emphasis should be placed "on the interchanges in the oral medium", as opposed to most education which is built on an "intercom" model with the teacher in front,
- "I think that the teaching of playwriting per se might not be possible unless it is integrated with other subject areas",
- "I suspect they'll want to learn to write for the screen instead",

- "There's good reason for presenting plays written for various media - stage, radio, T.V. - so that different techniques may be appreciated",
- "It is interwoven . . . . My first exposure to playwriting was from the point of view of an actress",
- "The world does not owe theatre a living. It must earn it",
- playwriting was seen "primarily as a tool for scene study for performance and as an aid in ensemble development", i.e., secondary students will be "more interested" in performing their own material,
- "The best thing a teacher can do is to give the student the courage to explore the most remote/deepest/most dangerous worlds within themselves . . . the demons and monsters lurking within",
- "Playwrights need their own space and personnel devoted to playwriting" because the writer "works in a completely different way" from "other theatre folk",
- "As a study that leads to audience building",
- the study of "audience reactions" is important,
- "Any writer could not but benefit from the broadest field of general knowledge . . . .",
- students can "do research and dramatize" such subjects as "history, their area, personal problems",
- "It helps a student to see that plays come from life - once this impulse is understood, the whole general study becomes a living, breathing enterprise",

- "Students should learn about good and bad dramaturgy from original plays, not from published "great plays or classics",
- "Make playwrights learn a musical instrument and play in a group",
- "It's important for a student to understand theatre as a cultural entity which can be part of anyone's experience and not just the preserve of academics or successful artists",
- "The best way is to set as a task the writing of a play",
- "The whole idea of teaching kids to write plays is nuts. You can teach them to act and they'll get something out of [it] . . . perhaps. But teaching actors even to spell is only going to confuse them",
- "A work of the imagination is both the cause and the effect, like a disease or a whirlpool . . . . It's not a science, it is an art",
- students "could read Chechov's diaries",
- "An interested teacher can be an invaluable asset when help and encouragement are all the budding writer can hope for. It's amazing how long good ones can subsist on a little praise and hope",
- "The link should be with theatre not creative writing",
- "Start with comedy. Forbid all jokes",
- "Must have a feeling for the play as literature",

- "The generalist studying theatre or drama should be able to study theatrical history or the play as literature without being forced to study "playwriting",
- "As a means of increasing the students' insights into script analysis",
- "It's a worthwhile pursuit for those who are interested",
- " 'Collective writing' is fun in class and is a hands-on experience in the 'theatre' experience",
- "Drama . . . is there to explore and not all of it will be a success, but all of it will be a learning and that is what school is about. It is only a mistake if you do it twice. Drama is somewhat dangerous to any system because it questions the mores and maginifies moments no matter what the consequences. Drama is one of the greatest learning devices because it allows the student to step into another character's reality and find that all people have common points of contact. On a practical and technical level, Drama helps students learn where a voice comes from, how to articulate, how to read out loud, how to make a point - - all of these techniques are an asset in no matter what occupation they take. Writing plays is a basic to drama. We don't mind watching kids play hockey for hours on end but think that creativity is something that is a gift from the gods. If students all wrote, we would develop an audience that is more critical and supportive of writing just as they are in sport."

B. Implications for the School Program

Among the many valuable recommendations and comments made in response to this question were several supporting implications discussed earlier - the need for students to become familiar with, and to analyze, a large variety of plays, including Canadian scripts, the need for them to gain a broad understanding of theatre practice and theatre history, the need for them to meet practising playwrights, the need for them to see and hear their own work on stage, and the value of practical exercises, notably improvisation.

The principal implication arises from the clearly perceived need to incorporate a playwriting component within drama education programs currently in existence and, conversely, to incorporate a theatre production component in specialized playwriting programs. Many respondents are agreed that a drama education program which lacks a playwriting component is overlooking a fundamental element of the art form to the detriment of the program. Many are also agreed that a playwright without a practical knowledge of the theatre is at a serious disadvantage. School programs should be designed to accommodate both aspects of the art of theatre.

IV CONCLUSIONS

A. Introduction

The large size of the sample and the numerous areas of agreement among substantial groups of respondents has made it possible to derive implications for the school program from responses to each of the ten questions. Taken together, these implications can provide educators with a clear and broadly-based picture of an ideal playwriting component which may be included in the high school program of dramatic education. They also can provide researchers with a well-founded set of hypotheses for further study. Indeed, the nature of the present study makes it necessary to regard the following description of the ideal playwriting component as a hypothetical one, subject to further investigation. Nevertheless, the substantial authority of the sample group and its clear convergence on certain points gives an urgency to the following recommendations. In the absence of contradictory evidence, they should be used to develop pilot units, to evaluate existing programs and to identify bell-weather courses which can be the subject of further research.

B. An Ideal Playwriting Course

In the first place, the idea that a playwriting course or unit should be included in a general program of dramatic education was strongly supported by the playwrights. A drama program without a playwriting component was considered seriously deficient. A corollory of this was the generally accepted assumption that students could, indeed, learn something of the playwrights' art within a school context. One advantage of offering the playwriting course in association with a general drama program is the opportunity it would afford to insure that playwriting students acquire a knowledge of and experience in practical theatre production. This kind of experience would be an essential element of any playwriting program. Students should be encouraged to gain experience in acting, directing and working in a variety of production areas.

The desirability of providing a playwriting experience for general drama students and the importance of practical theatre experience for the developing playwright were both given scant attention in the related literature. The playwrights' survey tends to confirm Kieth Johnstone's view (1979) that anyone can tell a dramatic story and that playwrights can learn a great deal through acting in improvised dramas.

Students should also be encouraged to see, hear, and read a wide variety of plays in many styles. They should be given an opportunity to analyse and discuss these plays and should be encouraged to apply lessons learned to their own work. In this

area, the related literature can be seen to agree, largely, with the practising playwrights.

The cornerstone of the entire curriculum, for the playwrights as well as for the related literature, must be the students' own experience in writing. Most respondents would agree that this would include the completion of at least one entire play, although this need not be a lengthy piece. It would also include a variety of shorter exercises each of which would focus on one or more aspects of the playwriting process. The students should be encouraged to write as soon as possible and as much as possible. This activity should be channelled into a regular daily routine if this does not prove incompatible with the individual's creative thought process. The routine, for those who follow it, must remain flexible to allow the student to respond to varying needs at different stages in writing the play.

The specific process followed in the course of writing a play must be allowed to vary from one individual to another and, indeed, from one play to another. This point is made forcefully by many playwrights, in the face of the very inflexible procedures imposed in some of the related literature. However, students should be made aware of the following composite working pattern so that they will be able to take advantage of the progression, or parts of it, according to personal need. The suggested progression begins with a period of gestation which culminates in the assumption of a suitable premise. The student then prepares a scenario outlining the plot and a personal history for at least some of the characters. This material is

applied in a flexible way, in the concerted writing of a first draft. This is then followed by further periods of planning, receiving of advice, rewriting and mounting informal performances of the work in progress. It is the teacher's responsibility to insure each student an opportunity to see and hear his or her own work in some kind of "workshop" performance.

The lengthy process of writing a play, or even part of one, would, according to the survey, require a special motivation on the part of students. This motivation must necessarily come from an enjoyment of the writing process itself. Under favourable circumstances students can be expected to respond positively to this unique outlet for self-expression and to the satisfaction to be had from developing one's own ideas and exploring areas of one's own interest. They can also be expected to enjoy working co-operatively with others. These motivating factors are likely to attract a wide variety of students but they should be particularly attractive to drama students who have already enrolled in a program which is dedicated to promoting this kind of satisfaction.

In spite of the power of these motivating factors, the time and effort required to see a single script through a number of revisions may give problems to many students if conventional expectations regarding the completion of written assignments are allowed to prevail. Rewriting is an essential part of a process in which virtually nobody gets it "right" on the first time through. The teacher must be responsible for generating an attitude in which rewriting is seen as a necessary and enjoyable

"intermediary" step rather than as a mark of failure and rejection. In a similar vein, advice and criticism must be handled in a positive and constructive way.

The teacher's role, by and large, must be one of encouragement. The teacher should be a practising playwright or should, at least, introduce practising playwrights to the students. The teacher should promote the student's individual creativity, avoiding doctrinaire positions and harsh judgments. He or she should establish a happy and liberating classroom atmosphere in which students feel free to make their own choices and in which process takes precedence over product. This emphasis on the creation of an encouraging atmosphere is another result of the present survey. It is barely mentioned in the related literature.

Responses to the ten questions provide a rich resource of ideas and recommendations on the development of characters and the structuring of plot. Major areas of agreement are concerned more with questions regarding character than with plot, a contingency which was evidently occasioned by the design of the questionnaire which asked two direct questions on character and only one on plot. There is clearly some convergence on points associated with structure, as well, but further study will be needed before general conclusions can be put forward on the subject of developing a plot. Meanwhile, the reader is referred to specific comments and book titles included under "Analysis of Responses", in Questions eight and nine. In general, it can be said that the preeminence given, traditionally, to plot at the

inception of a play is echoed by playwrights in our sample. Most were concerned with an action-centred drama. However, a significant minority of playwrights reflected the minority view found in the literature, giving preeminence to character.

With regard to character creation and development, responses contained a number of implications which should assist teachers and students in the playwriting unit. Students should, for example, try modelling characters on real-life people, perhaps combining two or more models to create a composite character. They should be encouraged to choose a set of characters who illustrate the theme or premise and who are essential to the plot. Indeed, they should even try, sometimes, to develop the structure of their play before deciding on characters. In a balanced program, however, students will also be encouraged to attempt a character-based approach beginning with the people, or types of people, who interest them and who arouse their strongest feelings. In these instances, plot should be allowed to develop, organically, from the characters. Students should be encouraged to find an approach to character selection which best suits their individual creative processes. In this area, the survey has helped to resolve some of the contradictions which were found in the related literature.

Once a group of characters (or potential characters) has been identified, students should be encouraged to prepare a detailed life history for each one, keeping a careful eye on real-life people for realistic detail. Each character should be endowed with the potential for conflict and change in the

realization that plot and character are inextricably interrelated. Each character should be given a clear motivation so that he or she can change, in the course of writing the play, without sacrificing his or her essential nature. Once again, flexibility is the key concept as students endeavour to follow their carefully worked out scenarios and life-histories while at the same time, remaining open to fresh ideas.

C. Questions for Further Research

On the whole, this study has achieved its goal of bringing the views of practising playwrights and the related literature to bear on the question of how drama students, particularly those at the secondary level, should be introduced to the processes of the playwright's art. It has also clarified a number of issues which can now, more readily be investigated quantitatively. Indeed, each of the points mentioned above, in the description of an ideal playwriting unit, is a clear hypothesis which can be included in future questionnaires or structured interviews. The ideal playwriting unit, as a whole, can be used to establish or identify bell-weather courses which can then be subjected to a thorough ethnographic study. Quantitative research can establish, specifically, to what extent practising playwrights concur with the general conclusions of this study. Ethnographic approaches would be useful in determining just how well the hypothetical model will work in practice and perhaps give some insight into why one program is more successful than another.

Finally, the question of play structure must be addressed. Are there a limited number of widely supported approaches as seems to be the case in character development? Or, is plot considered to be more ideosyncratic? An investigation of this issue would undoubtedly provide further insights of use to students of the playwrights' art and to their teachers, as well.

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VI APPENDICES

(1) The Questionnaire

(2) Researcher's Covering Letter

(3) Playwrights' Union Covering Letter

(4) Reminder Letter

(5) Biographical Sketch

APPENDIX ONE

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

06/86 #_____

TEACHING THE PLAYWRIGHTS' ART:
A SURVEY OF AUTHOR'S PRIORITIES

1. How did you learn to write plays? _____

2. What is your chief motivation for writing a play? _____

3. Do you write within the discipline of a routine working day? _____
   Please comment. _____

4. How should the student pick characters for a play? _____

5. Should the student write a scenario before beginning to write the dialogue?
   Please comment. _____

Reduced to 74% of original.

6. How should the student go about developing a character? _____

7. What is the value of re-writing part or all of a play? _____

8. Is there a specific order of events which you can recommend the student follow over the course of writing a play? _____

9. Is there a particular set of principles which you would recommend to a teacher who is about to teach a course (or a unit) on the processes of the playwright's art?

10. How should the teaching of the art of playwriting be related to a general education in the field of drama/theatre? _____

NOTE: The preceeding questions are intended to facilitate your response. However, if you feel that they have missed any aspect of the playwriting process as it relates to the student-writer (particularly at the secondary level) please feel free to add any comments on a separate sheet. All responses in any form will be gratefully received and considered in the final analysis.

Thank you.

APPENDIX TWO

RESEARCHER'S COVERING LETTER

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DUNCAN MCARTHUR HALL

Queen's University
Kingston, Canada
K7L 3N6

Dear Playwright:

I hope you will be good enough to spend a few minutes responding to the enclosed questionnaire. Your participation is greatly needed to ensure the success of a research project which has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Playwrights' Union of Canada.

As an educator and writer, I have become aware of the need to assist high school teachers of Dramatic Arts to develop a curriculum which includes a well-founded playwrighting component. Most jurisdictions which offer Drama as a subject at the secondary level require that some attention be paid to the writing of plays. However, very little is provided by way of support materials for the teachers who must carry out this assignment. A particular weakness in the limited guidance which is currently available to teachers is the surprising lack of attention paid to the opinions of practising playwrights in developing the principles on which support materials are based. The present survey is intended as a much-needed first step in rectifying this deficiency.

You are assured that confidentiality will be respected.

A stamped return envelope is enclosed.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence O'Farrell
Associate Professor

LO/sh
encl.

APPENDIX THREE

PLAYWRIGHTS' UNION COVERING LETTER

PLAYWRIGHTS UNION OF CANADA

8 YORK STREET, 6TH FLOOR, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, M5J 1R2, 416-947-0201.

15 June, 1986

Dear PUC Members:

I'm writing this note to introduce you to a new, fellow member - Lawrence O'Farrell. Larry is an Associate Professor of Drama in Education at Queen's University, and has come to us for assistance with an important undertaking. Throughout the past year and a half, PUC (Bryan Wade, in particular) has been spending a lot of time talking with educators, trying to start developing some solutions to the problem of how plays and playwriting should be, or could be, taught.

Larry's proposal has come at an extremely timely point. He'd like to assist high-school teachers develop a curriculum which includes a well-founded playwriting component. To do this, he'd like to ask the assistance of practicing playwrights in answering the enclosed questionnaire. Larry proposes to share his findings with us, and we'd like to encourage you to share your knowledge with him.

Thanks for your kind assistance with this important undertaking.

Warmest regards,

Jane

Jane Buss
Executive Director

JB/g
Encl:

APPENDIX FOUR

REMINDER LETTER

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DUNCAN MCARTHUR HALL

Queen's University
Kingston, Canada
K7L 3N6

Dear Playwright:

I am acutely aware of the pressure of time and the difficulty of keeping up with one's mail, particularly in the summer months. It is, therefore, as a respectful reminder that I am enclosing a second copy of the questionnaire which was originally sent to you about three weeks ago.

As I mentioned, at that time, the purpose of the survey is to develop a set of principles on which can be founded a playwriting component for inclusion in the high school Dramatic Arts curriculum. The Playwrights' Union of Canada has strongly endorsed this project.

It is vitally important that we receive a high rate of response so that our information is as complete and valid as possible. I hope you will try to find a few minutes to answer the survey questions. A return envelope has been provided.

Thank you, in advance, for your kind assistance.

Sincerely,

L. O'Farrell

Lawrence O'Farrell
Associate Professor

LO/sh

P. S. If you have already returned your questionnaire please accept my thanks and ignore this reminder.

APPENDIX FIVE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lawrence Patrick O'Farrell was born in Kingston, Ontario, Canada on May 30, 1945. He received his public education in Deep River and Peterborough, Ontario. He is a graduate of Queen's University (B.A. Hons.), Arizona State University (M.A.), and the National Theatre School of Canada. Lawrence O'Farrell was employed from 1970 to 1971 by the Manitoba Theatre Centre in Winnipeg as a stage manager and teacher. He is now Associate Professor of Drama in Education at Queen's University, Faculty of Education.

He is co-author of Drama for Canada a textbook for intermediate and senior dramatic arts, (1980, Academic Press, Canada), and has written plays for young and adult audiences. Recently, his two-act comedy No Earthly Business was produced at the Kawartha Summer Theatre in Lindsay, and at the Domino Theatre in Kingston. It is scheduled for further productions in the coming year. He has published several articles on educational drama in such journals as Children's Theatre Review, Youth Theatre Journal, Drama Contact, and CCYDA, Drama-Canada Journal. He was a member of the writing team which produced the Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum Guideline for Dramatic Arts (Intermediate /Senior, 1981). He has also presented papers and workshops at many regional, national and international conferences.

Professor O'Farrell has served as president of the Council of Drama in Education and as vice-president of CCYDA, Drama-Canada. His administrative duties at Queen's, Faculty of Education have included service as Chairman of the Arts, Co-ordinator of the Artist in Community Education Program and Co-ordinator of the Specialist program in Dramatic Arts.

His research into Ritual in Creative Drama was honoured in 1980 by a prize from the Children's Theatre Association of America.

He is married and the father of a son and two daughters. He lives in Kingston.